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Institute of Social and Religious Research

CHURCH COMITY

H. PAUL DOUGLASS

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CHURCH COMITY

A STUDY OF COÖPERATIVE CHURCH EXTENSION IN AMERICAN CITIES

BY

H. PAUL DOUGLASS

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"THE CHURCH IN THE CHANGING CITY,"
"HOW TO STUDY THE CITY CHURCH,"
ETC.



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PREFACE

The following chapters report the results of a first-hand, objective field study of comity as practiced by federations and councils of churches in twenty of the major American cities, and by the Massachusetts State Federation, with collateral information from a considerable additional number of cities. Following certain preliminary work, the study was made under the auspices of the Institute of Social and Religious Research during 1928, with the author as director and the Rev. C. E. Silcox and the Rev. Wilbur C. Hallenbeck as associates.

The investigation of comity constituted one part of a larger study of organized Protestant coöperation made under the auspices of the Institute, the results of which are to appear in three companion volumes of which this is chronologically the first. It will be followed by a similar study of varied phases of Federation work comprehended within the general field of social service and by a larger comprehensive report.[1]

In the present study, the following general sources of information were consulted: (a) Records of the creation, appointment, and definition of duties of comity committees; lists of committees; their composition and characteristics and attendance records; (b) declarations covering the theory of comity and its procedures; (c) records of comity cases dealt with by committees; (d) minutes of other activities with which comity committees have been concerned; (e) observation of comity committees in session and interviews with officials and members. (f) These sources have been supplemented in a considerable number of cases by surveys of some of the churches concerned, in connection with

[1]A full account of the origins, history of the project as a whole, and method of investigation will appear in this later volume.

previous or parallel investigations. (g) The judgments of numerous constituents of federations as to the importance of comity within the total federation program were secured by means of questionnaires.

The structure of this volume requires brief comment.

Following an introductory chapter, there are two chapters dealing with the more general aspects of comity, theoretical and practical, including its sanctions, its objectives, scope, and participants.

These are followed by a section concerned with comity in action. Chapter IV deals with the machinery of comity; showing the composition and characteristics of comity committees, the amount of time consumed by meetings and the regularity of attendance on the part of members. It also discusses the techniques employed in committee administration and discussion procedures. Chapters V and VI analyze and describe specific procedures in dealing with cases. Chapter VII classifies and discusses the standards and criteria of judgment which the practice of comity has developed. All these chapters deal in the main with comity in its ordinary piecemeal application as it deals with one case after another. Chapter VI, however, includes the consideration of large-scale applications of comity which rise to the dignity of co-operative city church planning. Following the section on comity in action, chapter VIII accordingly presents an attempt to sketch a critical background for the entire prior investigation in terms of a theory of urban churchmanship.

The concluding chapter constitutes a summary of the whole investigation. It represents an effort to think through briefly, step by step, the phases of comity that have to enter into the development of a practical plan of organization and procedure for a city church federation, and is intended thus to be helpful to cities desiring to formulate their own plans.

The limitation of the study to the city field excludes more than half of the current story of comity; namely, that which is being extensively practiced in the rural field through co-operative home missionary agencies and under the fostering

impulse of the national Home Missions Council. The federated and community churches promoted by the Massachusetts State Federation are also omitted as most properly pertaining to the rural situation. It is hoped, however, that this narrative of experience and these analyses of principles as developed under urban conditions may be suggestive to those working in the more extensive geographical areas of church extension.

The national governing bodies of a considerable number of denominations have approved the practice of comity. For example, the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1917 "solemnly charged" every agent of any Synod or Presbytery "to hold sacred all interdenominational agreements in matters of comity"; and had earlier approved such agreements in connection with church federations. Curiously no instance of formal appeal to such sanction was anywhere discovered.

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Institute of Social and Religious Research

CHURCH COMITY

H. PAUL DOUGLASS

Chapter I

THE EVOLUTION OF COMITY

The major American cities, with their suburbs, increased their population by about seven and three-quarter million people during the last census decade, while one and one-half million more people were gained by the cities of from 50,000 to 100,000 population. An equal gain is predicted for the present decade. The results for organized religion of this stupendous growth are manifold. The most obvious of them is that churches have to be found for these new millions. Many newcomers, of course, can distribute themselves among existing churches. Probably, however, at least half of them move into newer or incompletely occupied areas, outlying or suburban, where they have to be provided for, in large measure, by the creation of additional churches.

But this growth of cities never consists merely in the location of additional population in unoccupied and suburban areas. Its most outstanding feature is that it involves a continuous redistribution of population. A very large proportion of newcomers settle at old centers or focal points of the city, and people already settled there are crowded out into remoter sections of the city. These in turn displace the existing populations of the remoter sections, who thereupon betake themselves to the suburbs. This fact is even more important for religious institutions than is the numerical growth of cities. The frequent succession of population waves undermines the constituencies of churches and repeatedly requires the abandonment of fields and the removal of religious institutions to other sites.

The relocation of churches and the adaptat.on to new populations of churches that remain on old sites thus get to

be of equal moment with the creation and location of new churches.

Along with growth and the internal remaking of cities goes an unparalleled material progress, which continually modi-

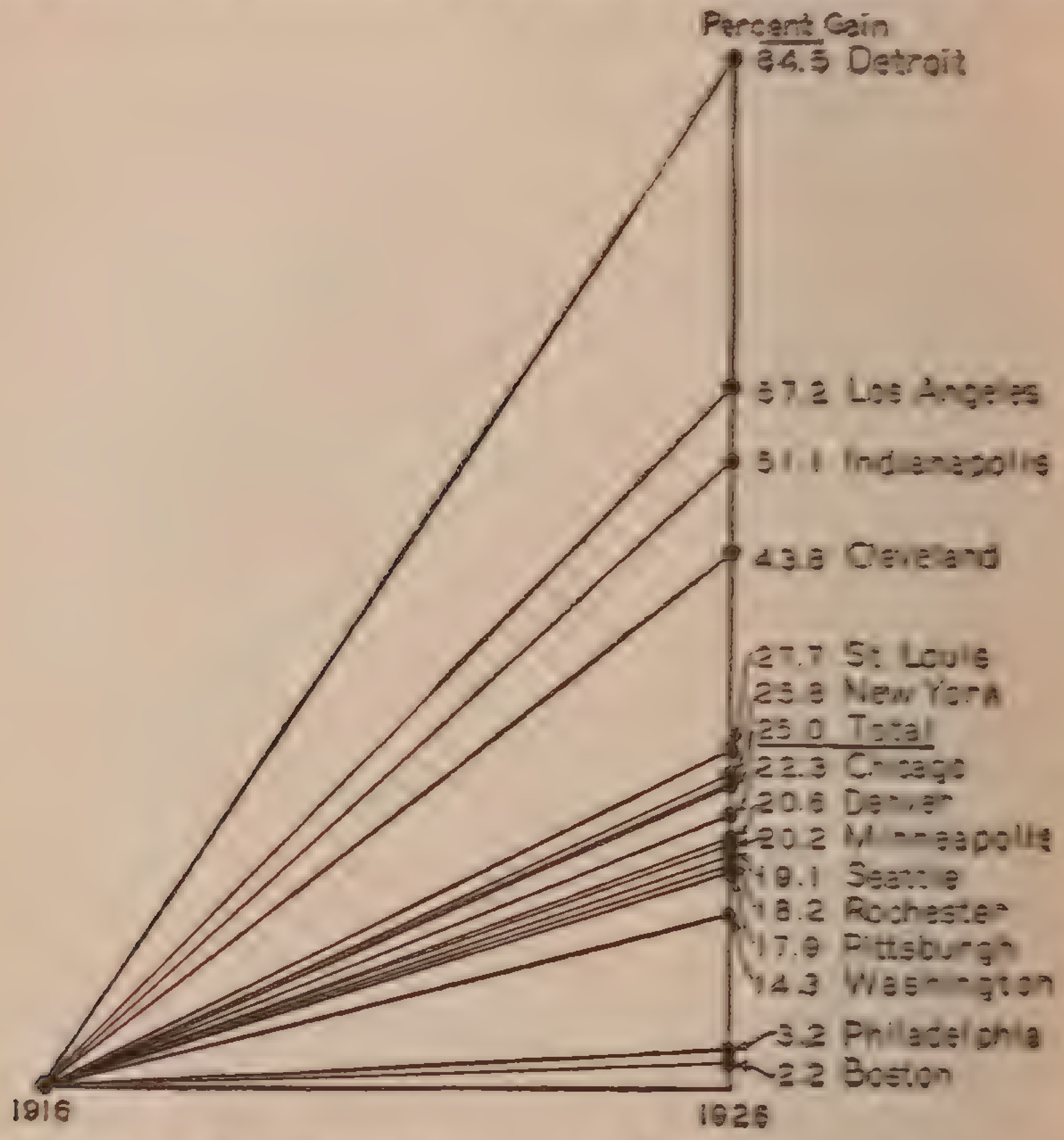


CHART I—PER CENT. INCREASE IN NUMBER OF CHURCHES 1916-26.

In fifteen selected cities which had 250,000 population or more in 1920.

fies the standard of living of city people. Ecclesiastical standards, as reflected in equipment, expenditures, and the elaboration of church life suffer a corresponding change. The city church is under constant pressure of the demand for a better quality of ministry expressed through an expanded program. Religious institutions are victims of the same

terrific necessity of "keeping up with the Joneses" that individuals and families feel. Organizational competition is intensified and speeded up.

ATTEMPTED DIRECTION OF THE URBAN EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

Within the two decades just passed, new experiments in Protestant coöperation have been made along many lines. The most inclusive and highly organized of these is the Church Federation movement. It is entirely natural that the churches and the denominations associating themselves in this movement should have discovered one of their major common tasks in an attempt to control the obviously important processes by which new churches are created for the new millions, by which old churches are readapted or removed as the consequence of shifting of population, and by which all churches are challenged to readjust themselves to the demand for improved institutional standards, manners, and methods.

It is foreign to the purpose of this volume to expose at length the well-recognized institutional evils that have habitually accompanied the urban expansion of the church in its uncontrolled and misdirected form. That ecclesiasticism has, in many respects, a sick institution on its hands in the city church is notorious, and has been fully substantiated by competent objective investigations. It is more than easy to bring to light flagrant instances of competitive overchurching, especially in the more desirable residential sections of cities. Thus, in a recently investigated case, a certain denominational family (which is itself split into numerous subdivisions) comprised less than one-fourth of the Protestants in a well-marked urban area. But it had overindulged in the establishment of churches till it was accountable for more than half of the entire number. The several subdivisions of this denominational family were themselves in bitter rivalry. Their churches, without exception, required

denominational subsidies to keep them alive. The denominational family had entered the territory in deliberate competition with other Protestant groups. Still other denominational rivalries existed in the community, some of them of long standing, bitter and acknowledged. In one instance, misdirected zeal had founded three churches of a single denomination, all drawing competitively upon the same general territory. As the result of the total situation, in an area of exceptional wealth and rapid growth, an extra-desirable residential territory, virtually all the churches were stationary or going backward. This was the consequence of a competitive crowding of denominational churches. The legitimate needs of the population for churches had been anticipated by fully thirty years.

If it would have any significance at all, Protestant co-operation must, of course, attempt to remedy situations like this, and must try to prevent their recurrence. And this is exactly what one finds. Coöperative effort in such matters under the name of "Comity" appears as one of the major activities of nearly all church federations; and along with evangelism and social service, comity constitutes almost an invariable department of their current work.

SITUATIONS INVOLVING COMITY PROCESSES

The most natural approach to an understanding of comity is to consider the situations in which the institutional expansion of one church or denomination may affect that of others, and which coöperating churches may need to deal with through joint machinery. The experience of a single federation in a single year adequately illustrates the range and wide variety of these situations.

During this period the comity committee of this federation dealt with the following *new situations:* (1) a religious survey of new suburban areas; (2) proposed organization of congregations; (3) location or purchase of church sites; (4) organization of Sunday schools; (5) organization of missions

or branch churches; (6) selection of location for outdoor preaching.

Situations relating to existing churches which came up for joint consideration within the year were: (7) relocations of churches; (8) merger of two churches of the same denomination; (9) federations of local churches of different denominations; (10) transfer of churches from one denomination to another; (11) responsibility for fields abandoned by removing churches; (12) splits in local congregations and problem of whether or not to recognize seceding group.

Comity situations relating to new policies of work included the following: (13) undertaking of special work for foreign-speaking groups by churches of American antecedents; and (14) abandonment of foreign-language services by churches of foreign antecedents which thus come into more direct competition with the neighboring churches.

Among general *matters of common concern* dealt with by the committee were: (15) a cöoperative real estate holding company to acquire church sites; and (16) methods of making adequate surveys to determine proper church location.

The foregoing list from a year's transactions in a single federation is fairly typical of what most comity committees find to deal with sooner or later.

THE GENERAL FIELD AND THE DISTINCTIVE SPIRIT

What then is comity? In essence it is coöperative church extension; and some federations apply this term to the processes which the majority designate as comity.[1]

It is highly instructive, however, that the term most frequently in use is one that indicates, not a process, but the spirit in which a process is undertaken. Comity signifies that the atmosphere in which church extension is to be carried on by the coöperating denominations is one of courtesy and good will, with the greatest regard for the

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[1]In a few cases, both terms are used, and the phase of work under discussion is described as that of "comity and church extension."

respective rights and purposes of the coöperating agencies. Comity is thus intended to contrast with competition in the institutional expansion and readjustments of the church.

History

The existence and distinctive place in the Church Federation movement of a body of thought and system of practice dominated by and dedicated to this spirit are illuminated and in part explained by a consideration of its historical origins and evolution.

ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION

Looking back over the history of federations, one finds that comity was almost always present as an early, if not an original, interest. One of the more naïve impulses of the federation movement at the first was to undertake a good many types of service interdenominationally. Thus, the first constitution of the Philadelphia Federation included as an objective the carrying on of interdenominational work with foreigners; and here and there a good many proposals for the establishment of jointly administered institutions have been entertained first and last. This tendency was reinforced by the coöperative necessities of the World War period, and was pushed to the extreme in the proposals of the Interchurch World Movement.

But in a considerable number of cities—among them New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Chicago—organization for comity preceded the establishment of a federation. As part of a growing tendency, after 1905, toward coöperation in the general field of home missionary enterprise, councils of denominational executives responsible for missionary extension had arisen. Their major concern was with church planning in its various concrete forms. In cities, these councils, virtually without exception, were subsequently absorbed into the comity machinery of the federations as

the latter came into existence. The result of this absorption—in contrast with the earlier impulse, and coincident with the reaction against interdenominationalism all along the line—was to put a strongly denominational stamp upon the practice of comity. Comity processes, in short, came to be denominationally operated. The church was extended through coöperative planning, but almost exclusively in denominational forms. The genius of the movement and its procedure were alike compelled to confine themselves within the bounds of denominational regularity. Comity became a conformist impulse. As fresh forms of religious organization evolved they were persistently forced into denominational molds. Within these limits, however, comity has greatly gained in practical vogue. The recognition of its desirability has increased. Its sanctions have been strengthened. It has steadily developed greater detail and precision of procedure. This general course of evolution is to be kept in mind in consideration of the contemporary practice of comity, the sense of the concrete reality of which will be heightened by consideration of the history of comity in a specific case.

EVOLUTION OF COMITY IN PHILADELPHIA

The Philadelphia Federation of Churches, in its twenty years of existence, has seen a definitely marked evolution of policy with respect to comity. The general progress of this evolution is evidenced in theory, in machinery, in procedures and techniques, as well as in results.

The federation was established in 1909. Comity first appears by name in the constitution of the next year, which lists it as a major interest. At this period, federation talk about comity was in the loose and general terms popularized by the home-mission agencies, as a form of coöperation seeking to prevent "overlooking" and "overlapping" on the part of Protestant religious forces. Responsibility in these matters had been entrusted to a "church extension" committee. The earlier efforts to apply comity principles to cases

resulted—so far as records show—in protests and disagreements. The first step toward great definiteness of procedure was a resolution requiring a denomination to give notice in advance of an application for the approval of a church location, so that the members of the church extension committee might have opportunity to consider the matter prior to a meeting called for decision.

In 1919 the general status of comity as it had evolved through a decade was defined by a formal declaration as follows:

> "Resolved, that while the Federation claims no legislative power it is the sense of the Comity Committee that in the matter of forming new congregations of any denomination represented in this Federation, the representative of such denomination, prior to taking any steps looking to the organization of a new church, should submit the proposal to the Federation for its counsel and advice in the spirit of that church comity which the Federation seeks to foster and maintain."

In 1918, the separately organized council of home missions' superintendents had disbanded and its functions had been merged in the comity commission—thus consolidating the machinery.

The evolution of comity practice throughout subsequent years strengthened the requirement of advance notice in the case of proposals to found new churches, and that of definiteness in the description of the intended locations. More cases were handled and with better success.

In recent years, the thinking of the federation with respect to comity has been enriched by formal pronouncements upon such problems as (1) the proper attitude toward non-denominational community churches; (2) conditions under which a denominational church allotted an exclusive field may function as a community church; (3) the residual responsibility for a field from which a church is removing.

Important relationships have meanwhile been adjusted and far-reaching problems tentatively approached. Thus at the request of the State Council of Churches, the federation has assumed responsibility with respect to comity in the entire Philadelphia suburban area in Pennsylvania.

The requirement of a survey in the event of protest of location has been gradually strengthened. Additional requirements, worked out through controversy, include the following: That surveys should be made by the committee only, and not by the interested denominations; that they should be made promptly and at the expense of the denomination proposing the new location. In view of the long delays sometimes naturally intervening between the allocation of a field and its actual occupancy by a denomination, resolutions of recent date require a denomination that has been granted such a field to give notice of actual measures to perfect occupancy and to receive reauthorization from the comity committee before actually beginning work.

With respect to new and sparsely settled areas, the ideal has grown up that churches should be allotted exclusive parishes a mile in diameter.

Certain subsidiary policies looking toward a more complete and positive conception of comity have developed; for example, that of making general surveys in various districts in advance of particular proposals by denominations. Again, the denominations have been periodically called upon to file lists of all new work under contemplation, so that all current proposals might be considered in relation to one another.

In general, what lies behind these developments of policy is the growing habit of the denominational leaders in their official capacities to recognize and work in harmony with the comity committee. As a result, the Philadelphia federation now has a fairly complete theory of comity and a reasonably adequate system of practice. A similar course of evolution has taken place in other cities. Some have come on faster and gone farther, others more slowly and less far.

Relationships

comity within the federation movement

The practice of ecclesiastical comity in cities has already been identified as no detached phenomenon, but rather as an integral part of the movement of Protestant church federation. By virtue of this relationship it operates within certain special limitations. These should be understood at the outset.

First of all, the federation movement has geographical limitations which comity shares. The movement has little vogue in the South; and in cities on or near the border comity is practiced so feebly as to give clear evidence of its regional limitation. Of nearly two dozen cities of over one hundred thousand population which were studied on this point, Louisville was the only one whose federation failed to have a committee on comity, and Louisville naïvely introduces into its constitution this apologetic statement, "Comity on the location of churches has been contemplated, but action was deferred until such time as the judgment of all members of the Council deems it advisable to establish such plan of work." This time is not coming very rapidly south of the Ohio River.

Again, Negro churches, though rarely excluded in theory, are rarely included in fact within the working scope of comity practice. As a group, the churches have not achieved the degree of discipline and capacity for internal coöperation that is necessary to make comity work.

Even beyond this, comity is incomplete in denominational scope. A few denominations (aggregating, to be sure, but small memberships) are excluded as non-evangelical. Others, including some of the larger ones, are partially self-excluded; that is to say, while individual churches from within the ranks of these denominations may practice comity, the denominational tradition as a whole does not countenance it. This leaves serious gaps in the ranks of united Protestantism at this point. There is no fully satisfactory remedy for the

evils of competitive maladjustment while important representatives in the major denominations stand outside of the processes.

Finally, even denominations fully connected with federations, and professing the practice of comity, are not equally loyal to it. Differences between liturgical and non-liturgical churches, between the two theological wings of certain evangelical bodies, between the churches of English-speaking and non-English-speaking antecedents, work out into differences of church extension policy, and yield situations sometimes more and sometimes less pliable under comity handling.

All told then, while the evidence points to comity as something that has come to stay, its victory is by no means complete; nor can the victory of coöperative good will ever be won in merely one single field. The real problem is whether comity is having its share of success among the entire group of forces operating constructively within the church federation movement for more efficient Protestant coöperation. And this only the present report in its totality can answer.

COMITY WITHIN THE CITY BUILDING PROCESSES

The expansion of the city church is a piece of the expansion of the city itself. Materially and institutionally, the churches constitute no inconsiderable items among urban phenomena. They are numerous, widely scattered, conspicuous, and represent vast investments. Idealism is trying to direct city growth in many phases, and the particular idealism represented in the doctrine and practice of comity is a stream running along beside other streams, deriving from common sources and emptying into a single one.

An enumeration of a few contacts occurring frequently in comity experience will serve to show how weighty are its relationships with other constructive movements for the betterment of cities.

Thus, like other practical enterprises involving geo-

graphical extension of institutions throughout cities, comity is confronted by restrictions growing out of the ideals of city builders in other spheres. The attempted location of churches often conflicts with real estate restrictions or zoning ordinances. Current standards of city planning will not permit the establishment of a church that cannot make an investment in keeping with that of other enterprises of a given neighborhood. A church building, for example, must cost say six times the lot upon which it is located. These requirements sometimes work hardship; but in general they have a very tonic effect upon church practice, the standards of the children of this generation frequently being more creditable in material things than the standards of the children of light.

Another set of exceedingly intricate problems, faced alike by city planning and by comity practice, concern the relation of city and suburbs. Together these two constitute a single metropolitan community. But the respective functions, rights, and duties of the center and the circumference, and the normal and wholesome balance between them, are unsettled. In general, the city has never come to satisfactory terms with its suburbs. Comity comes into collision with this problem in many cities. The city's churches may fall under different ecclesiastical supervision from those of the outlying sections. A comity committee thoroughly representative of the city may not be at all adequately representative of the suburban fringe. This presbytery, for example, has jurisdiction in the city. Another presbytery, perhaps with headquarters in a smaller city outside of the metropolitan zone—one cherishing a definite anti-metropolitan bias—may have jurisdiction in the suburbs, where the most active problems of church location now lie. The officials of this second presbytery may scorn the coöperative arrangements of their own denomination when it is sought to apply them outside of the corporate limits of the city. Thus even the cities in which comity is best established frequently have a secondary problem; namely, that of winning the suburban denominational forces to recognize comity as applying to them. Essentially the

same difficulty is shared by almost all phases of metropolitan planning. Thus four hundred municipalities have to be considered in determining the future of the Greater New York area. Comity merely has to face a small version of a general difficulty.

The social readjustments involved in city growth present another point at which comity shares some of the profoundest of urban problems. Here, for example, in a new suburb a population of superior economic and social standards is being imposed upon an old suburban area whose antecedents were strongly rural. The plain little homes of yesterday are outnumbered and out-moded. Paths must turn themselves into pavements and streets into boulevards. Easy-going village ways must be conventionalized on a more exacting plan. The old churches are distinctly not up to the demands of the newcomers. It is exceedingly hard to mix the two types of population. Something similar happens within the city limits when new populations, say of foreigners or Negroes, move in around old churches that are distinctly beyond them in economic and social tradition.

In brief, comity concerns some of the most complicated and vital problems of human adjustment in community living. It shares all the practical difficulties which the city faces in the process of growth. The church is under the necessity of making decisions that are at once extremely far-reaching and full of danger. But so are business enterprises, schools, and other community agencies that try to keep up with expanding cities. Comity involves a coöperative undertaking of these adjustments and a common facing of these dangers through and in behalf of organized Protestantism.

The business of adequately churching cities is thus something to be conceived in more than ecclesiastical terms. The matter has to be raised to the level of scientific city planning. Neither as a mode of life nor as a piece of social machinery is the city fully understood; and it is far indeed from conquered. The entire process of urbanizing the human mind is full of profound adventure. This tremendous half-tamed

creature, the metropolis, has now to be disciplined from the standpoint of religious organization, and no one can be sure that the Robot traits in the city will not get a strangle hold on all her living people, in their religious as well as their material interests.

SUMMARY

In view of the scope and variety of the situations for which the practice of comity has been applied, and of its rapid evolution and significant relationships, its claim to appreciative investigation as a piece of the phenomena of organized religion appears unquestionable. Comity provokes stirring challenges and presents striking alternatives.

On the one hand, it looks as though the practice of comity through church federations in cities has ushered in a new day for the urban church. Coöperative planning in church extension is in actual force in most of the major American cities and among the major Protestant denominations. Few churches have been organized or relocated during the last ten years without consciously facing the question, How will this affect the churches of other denominations? And a very large number of new or readjusted churches have resulted from deliberate joint agreements on the part of the Protestant forces.

This constitutes a revolutionary change away from the bad old times. Rapid progress has also been made in the development of the technical tools necessary to make such a practice general, such as methods of survey, of systematic conference, and of reaching common decisions.

Comity has had a large influence upon the general ecclesiastical atmosphere and upon the attitudes of churches and denominations toward one another outside of and beyond the issues strictly involved in its practice. Finally the data gathered in this study show a very large measure of success in reaching acceptable comity decisions.

But the situation has another side. The comity idea has not gripped all churches nor all denominations equally;

nor have they all evolved to anything like an equal extent the predispositions that underlie the practice of comity. While the assimilation of the major Protestant groups to one another has gone so far as to cut the ground from under the older sectarianism, stubborn prejudices still thrive in spots. There is a clannishness that takes refuge in the conviction of having a better standing with God than others enjoy. There are conceptions of the truth and of the church that still permit some to hold that they possess the only truth and that theirs is the only church.

Moreover, an out-moded administrative tradition still survives in spots. In this very year of grace a bishop of a great church has been quoted as asserting that "Competition is good for religion."

It is then into a still crowding and jostling ecclesiastical world that comity tries to instill the practice of gentle manners and the reign of the fraternal spirit. The strivings of this spirit to create for itself a body in the shape of a systematic theory and practice of coöperative church extension constitutes the field and the theme of the present investigation.

Chapter II

AUTHORITY AND OBJECTIVES OF COMITY

When Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick's Park Avenue Baptist Church in New York desired to reëstablish itself on the basis of a broader conception of its ministry and in a new location, it first made a careful survey of the city to find a strategic site, where it would not directly compete with any other organized church. Consultation with the leaders of other important churches that might be remotely affected followed, and the entire group of Protestant ministers in the section of the city in which the church finally located was asked to suggest a parish policy, so that the new enterprise would fit into the existing situation in the most helpful manner.

The organized practice of comity through church federations undertakes to do systematically and continuously, and for entire cities, what was done somewhat independently in the Park Avenue case. To accomplish this purpose, all federations have of course had to develop machinery and methods analogous to those discovered in Philadelphia. There has to be a committee charged with responsibility for comity matters. There must be established procedures for the handling of cases and methods appropriate to apply to them. But behind these things there must have been common thinking with respect to the basic idea. This must be embodied in fundamental agreements and statements of principle. It is essential to reach an understanding of these controlling ends before confusing the mind with multifarious details concerning the ways in which their accomplishment has been attempted.

Accordingly, the actual ways in which comity practices are set up in federations, and the outstanding characteristics of their machinery are merely touched upon at this point.

This chapter and the following one discuss, as a major theme, the more general aspects of comity as set forth in the declarations and usages of federations. These cover such matters as its authority and sanction, its objectives, its scope, and the eligibility and participation of the coöperating bodies. This chapter tells by virtue of what, and why, the practice of comity is set up; chapter III shows what comity attempts to cover, and who are included in its processes.

LIMITATIONS GROWING OUT OF THE DATA

The nature of the available information puts distinct limitations upon the study. The data are not comparable in form. No general pattern is followed either in the organization of comity machinery or in the records of its operations. Again, the records themselves are extraordinarily incomplete. This is owing in part to the fact that one of the prevailing attitudes is to regard comity as something that primarily concerns conflict, and consequently has no interest to record the outcome of a case beyond the point where conflict ceases to present a problem for the committee. Only one instance was found in which a church federation maintained a cumulative record of its comity cases, bringing together in one place a summary of all data relating to each case.

Owing to such limitations, the study was compelled to deal chiefly with an account and an analysis of varying significant aspects of the comity movement as a whole and with certain large tendencies within it, rather than with accurate comparisons of individual federations.

THE PRACTICE OF COMITY: HOW INSTITUTED

How comity arose along with the general federation movement has already been shown. But how does comity get set up as a practice in the local federation?

With respect to their methods of internal organization, church federations fall into two distinct classes. Some provide in advance for all their intended activities in constitu-

tions or by-laws. Others leave to the governing board the creation of such departments or commissions as the current interests of the federation shall require from time to time. In the cases examined, these two types of constitution were found in about equal numbers. In about half the cases, comity is written into the basic document of the federation; in the other half, it exists as the result of specific action by the governing body of the organization.[1]

By what specific means is the practice of comity carried forward; and how adequate are they? What one actually finds is a set of comity committees aggregating three hundred and eighteen members in the seventeen cities studied. The average committee has seventeen members. Nearly three-quarters of the total body are clergymen, and more than half are paid executives of denominational extension agencies. These committeemen are the representatives of the coöperating denominations, and their decisions represent the ultimately effective element in the comity process.

Because of the dominant rôle which these committees play, brief attention will be given their characteristics at this point. Their functions and techniques furnish the special theme to chapter IV.

Measured in terms of attendance, the average committee performance rates decidedly low, being but 38 per cent. of the possible attendance. Denominational executives attend somewhat more faithfully than others. But the several elements of committees are in most cases poorly integrated. Either the clerical or the lay element tends to drop out and leave the actual responsibility to the other. Apparently only occasionally is the competent amateur developed who can hold his own in committee effectiveness with the paid executive. On the other hand, when the paid executive ceases to dominate he inclines to cease to attend.

The result is that there is relatively little continuity of interest or attention. If, therefore, regularity of attendance

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[1] *Protestant Coöperation in American Cities*, a companion volume in this series, includes a comprehensive analysis of the constitutions of federations.

and continuous attention to business are the conditions of real representativeness, comity committees as a whole are decidedly lacking in this character.

It is only fair to forewarn the reader of so central a fact before inviting him to consider the theory of comity in the abstract.

Authority and Sanction of Comity

The first question to be asked relative to the theory of comity is: By what right and warrant does the practice exist at all? Most church federations publish declarations of the principles of comity. In these they attempt to ascribe authority of some sort to what they have set up as a practice. Observation of the moods of actual participants and systematic canvassing of the attitudes of constituents show how far these appeals to authority are sanctioned by the actual feelings of participants. The study has drawn upon both sources of information.

About one-third of the federations studied do not publish comity statements and apparently do not dare to attempt any. Still others set forth certain comity procedures only, and very hesitantly, with a virtual admission that the federation fears to try to formulate any sort of a claim of authority for them. Those federations that make more positive statements tend to base the authority of comity on one of four grounds. It is either (1) deduced from certain assumed principles thought to be implicit in the coöperative spirit or in the sentiment of Christian fraternity; or else (2) it is based on successful experience; or (3) it is announced as a working policy without any other express sanction; or, (4) finally, it gets its authority from formal agreement entered into by participating denominations.

EXAMPLES

Comity declarations looking for their sanction to antecedent principles are illustrated by the Minneapolis and the

Indianapolis federations. Their declarations set forth in identical language the fact that the federation "has appointed various committees through which it hopes to advance the Kingdom of God. Among these is the committee on comity." In similar vein the St. Louis federation declares that good will between coöperating denominations implies that they will operate as friendly co-laborers in church extension, rather than as rivals.

The sanction of successful experience is claimed by The Federated Churches of Cleveland in its "Principles of Comity," as follows:

> "The following principles are the result of fourteen years of coöperation among the churches of Greater Cleveland. They are intended to guide the denominational Church Extension Societies in the selection of locations for new churches, and to assist established churches in securing sites for the purpose of relocation."

Brooklyn copies this formula, though claiming fewer years of experience as the ground of sanctions.

The Dayton Council of Churches, on the contrary, is content merely to assert: "It shall be the policy of the Council" that the affiliated organizations shall practice comity according to certain procedures as outlined.

As grounds of authority for the practice of comity, specific agreements function in two different ways because the organizations that call themselves church federations are of two sorts. The first is a voluntary combination of local churches; the second, a combination of local denominational bodies confirmed by appropriate ecclesiastical action.[2]

This second type of federation does not need to institute a separate comity compact because comity is almost certain to be one of the professed objects of the federation. Membership itself accordingly is the technical equivalent of assent

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[2]The divergent theories and implications represented by the two types will be treated in a companion volume, *Protestant Coöperation in American Cities*.

to a comity agreement; and, so far as denominational action can, it carries the obligation of all the churches of the denomination to observe comity. While probably such assent is not quite so significant as the acceptance of a separate covenant relating exclusively to comity, there is no reason to suppose that comity is less well practiced for that reason. On the other hand there is no evidence that it is better practiced; for example, that a higher percentage of cases is submitted to comity procedures or that there is more than average success in their outcome. So far as the investigation can see, success is more due to variations in technique than to any variation in methods of instituting comity.

Federations composed of voluntarily associated local churches may or may not have submitted their comity declarations to the local ecclesiastical bodies governing the several coöperating denominations. A considerable number of them have done so.

But only in a single case, that of St. Louis, do such declarations of principles and procedures appear to have actually received formal adoption by the entire group of coöperating denominations, in this case thirteen in number. Even in St. Louis the agreement is qualified by a reservation on the part of the Protestant Episcopal Church safeguarding its liberty of action. In Rochester, for example, an attempt to institute a revised comity agreement resulted in favorable action by only three denominations. Here, however, as in a number of other cases, the federation goes ahead on the strength of established usage, in default of complete formal agreement. In no case has it been possible to get even the denominations assenting to comity principles to agree that they will invariably abide by the decisions of comity agencies; and even if they did, the problem of the independent local church would still exist.[3]

[3]The Ohio State Council of Churches claims still another ground of sanction for its comity processes. Its declaration rehearses that the Council is being asked by many communities for help in consolidating their churches, and that it acts in response to such requests. This may be classed as a variation upon the argument from successful experience.

SOURCE OF COMITY DECLARATIONS

The question, who shall make the comity declaration in behalf of a federation? seems secondary. But it finds real significance because the answer varies somewhat with the degree to which the practice of comity has become established. Comity declarations are never found in constitutions or by-laws. They can generally be changed by the simple resolution of some competent authority. In the majority of cases they are merely statements adopted by the governing body of the particular federation concerned; or sometimes merely adopted by the comity committee itself. The committee passes a resolution to the effect that it proposes to attempt coöperative action in the matter of church locations and the like on the basis of certain principles and procedures. Co-operating denominations are invited to participate on this basis. In a few cases where committees operate with a large degree of independence, such declarations are not submitted even for the formal review of the governing body.

CAVEATS

With such relatively feeble origins and such moderate claims to authority, it is not strange that one finds a good many sugar-coating devices attached to comity declarations. The actions of comity committees are repeatedly declared to be advisory only. Each case is to be determined on its own merits, and comity decisions are to be accepted only for what they are worth.

When comity has to be expounded, a distinctly apologetic note is likely to characterize the exposition. The following from Baltimore may serve as an example:

"Accepting the present denominational organization of Christianity as an existent fact, no one may deny rights of self-determination to the various bodies comprehended within the general Church of Christ. No external agency can hope to issue orders saying either

'You must do this' or 'You are not permitted to do that.'

"Christian unity does not lie along any road of compulsion.

"But Comity as a spiritual and practical forerunner of unity may be had through means at once more persuasive and more potent.

"In the faith of that possibility, the Baltimore Federation of Churches disclaims for its Comity Commission every thought of exercising the slightest degree of authority in the effort to eliminate from this metropolitan community the reproach of rival Christian undertakings that hinder one another's prosperity.

"To make good this purpose, the Federation believes that nothing else is needed than unreserved conference between responsible leaders of the city's various Christian communions.

"No doubt these leaders differ largely in their views of what constitutes competition among local congregations. They have different judgments on what is an improper proximity of churches. They entertain especially different thoughts about the importance of enabling Christians to maintain hereditary church connections.

"But all of these ideas, being honest convictions of honest lovers of Christ, can be freely expressed in confidential consultation. Any opinion that is fit to inhabit a Christian mind is worthy to be voiced where true Christian men meet to consider common Christian problems.

"And if by such conference agreements cannot be reached, those who must go their separate way will go with the respect due to the open-minded and frank.

"But increasingly out of the established custom of speaking face to face with all candor about interdenominational contacts must grow a mutual understanding 'void of all offense' which will accomplish a thousand times more in the exhibit of Christian brotherhood than constraint of any form could ever bring to pass."

A similarly conciliatory statement is that of the Home Missions Council of Northern California:

> "This Council does not claim authority over any church. Its weight is the worth of its advice and the force of the fact that the matter in hand has been frankly and fully discussed by the denominational representatives of the coöperating churches and that their conclusion has been registered through the decision of the Council."

In one or two cases is it pointed out that participation in the other departments of federation activity logically implies respect for comity practices. This point is made explicit by the Home Missions Council of Northern California as follows:

> "Acceptance of membership and participation in the activities of this Council involves a moral obligation on the part of each administrative officer to present to this body for consideration and advice, prior to its inauguration, every project falling within the general scope of coöperation."

On the contrary, numerous federations make express constitutional provision that adherent churches may abstain from coöperation with respect to activities with which they cannot agree, while at the same time they continue in good standing with respect to those with which they do agree. Probably, in the long run, the present genius of the federation movement would not incline to argue that membership in a federation as such necessarily creates moral obligation to practice comity.[4]

THE BACKING OF FAVORABLE SENTIMENT

None of the federations investigated had thought to ascertain directly the strength of favorable sentiment on the part of its constituents. Yet obviously this is the ultimate

[4] *Protestant Coöperation in American Cities* will present the data underlying this judgment.

sanction of comity as well as of all other voluntary inter-denominational processes. The present study therefore took a referendum of opinion of the supporters of federations in

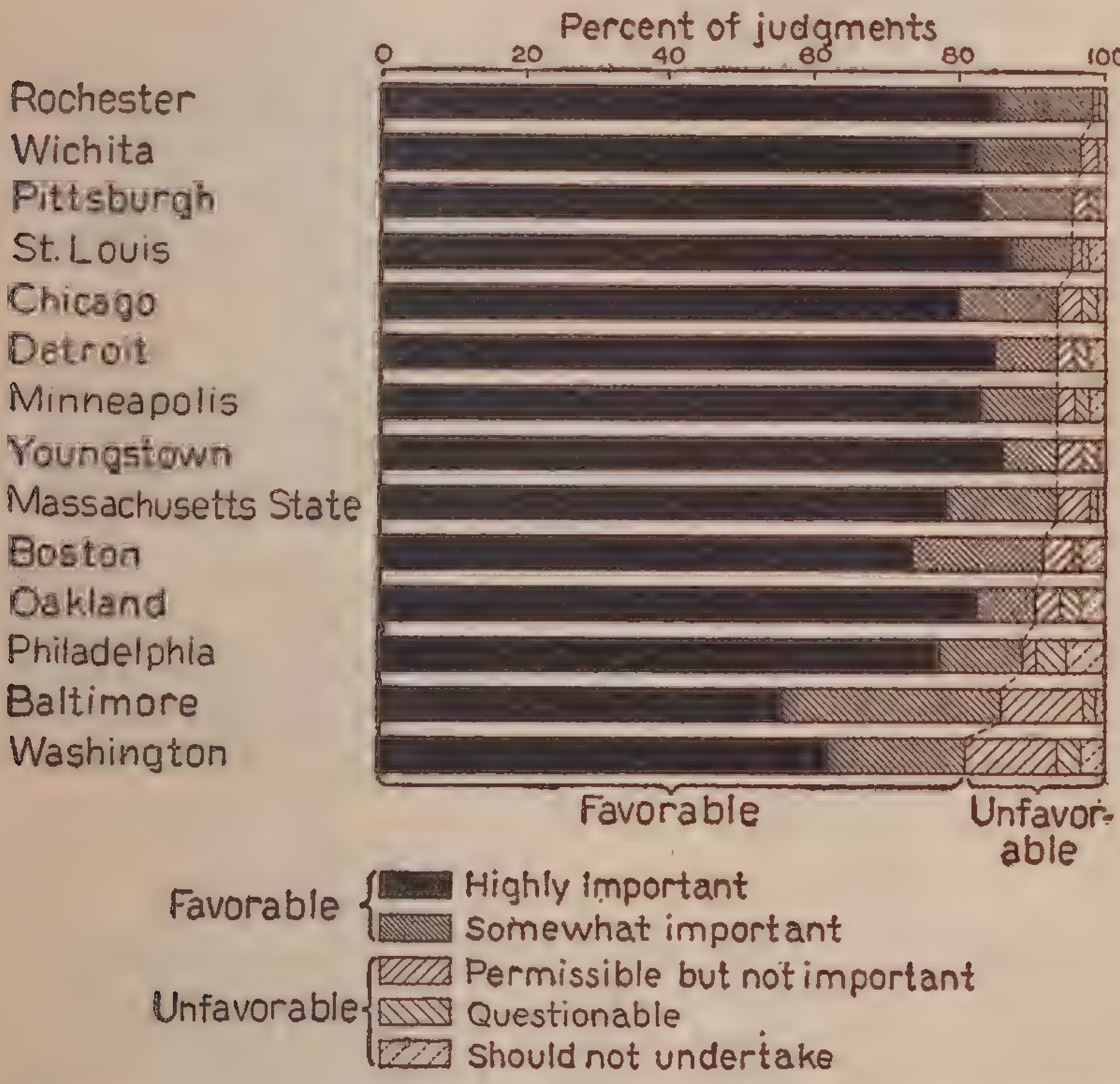


CHART II—DISTRIBUTION OF JUDGMENTS OF CONSTITUENTS WITH RESPECT TO IMPORTANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS OF COMITY.
Fourteen Church Federations.

fourteen cities by means of a questionnaire sent to all constituents whose names appeared on the federations' customary mailing lists. Returns with respect to comity were received from 2,205 persons, who rendered judgment upon the existing practice of comity in their respective federations classified under five heads, as follows:

(1) Something which the federation should not undertake at all

(2) Questionable
(3) Permissible but not important
(4) Somewhat important
(5) Highly important

The distribution of their answers—aggregating 8,986 individual judgments—is shown in the following tables. The degree to which comity as practiced by each federation is supported by the verdict of its constituency is indicated by Table I.

TABLE I. JUDGMENTS OF CONSTITUENTS OF FOURTEEN FEDERATIONS AND COUNCILS OF CHURCHES AS TO THE APPROPRIATENESS AND IMPORTANCE OF COMITY AS PRACTICED IN CURRENT PROGRAMS

Federations	*No. of Constituents Answering*	*Aggregate Judgments*	Per Cent. Distribution of Judgments: *Should not Undertake*	*Questionable*	*Permissible But not Important*	*Somewhat Important*	*Highly Important*	*Total*
Baltimore	184	736	1	2	11	31	55	100
Boston	146	292	3	1	4	19	73	100
Chicago	247	1,480	1	2	3	14	80	100
Detroit	154	615	2	2	2	9	85	100
Minneapolis	211	634	2	2	2	11	83	100
Oakland	78	313	3	3	3	9	82	100
Philadelphia	139	418	5	4	2	12	77	100
Pittsburgh	116	809	1	1	2	13	83	100
Rochester	168	670	*	1	1	13	85	100
St. Louis	186	557	2	1	1	9	87	100
Washington	174	522	3	3	13	20	61	100
Wichita	146	1,021	1	*	2	15	82	100
Youngstown	102	305	1	2	3	8	86	100
Mass. State	154	614	1	1	4	16	78	100

*Less than half of 1 per cent.

As thus measured, comity as actually practiced appears much more popular in some cities than in others. On the average, however, about eight constituents out of ten rate it highly important.

How does the distribution of constituents' attitudes with respect to comity compare with their distribution with respect to the program of the federations as a whole? This is

shown in Table II, which ranks federations separately with respect to their standing at the two ends of the scale of judgments.

TABLE II. RANKING OF FOURTEEN FEDERATIONS AND COUNCILS OF CHURCHES ACCORDING TO JUDGMENTS OF CONSTITUENTS UPON COMITY COMPARED WITH TOTAL PROGRAM

Federations	Per Cent. of Judgments			
	Highly favorable (position 5)		Unfavorable (positions 1–3)	
	Comity Items	*Total Program*	*Comity Items*	*Total Program*
St. Louis	87	78	4	7
Youngstown	86	75	6	7
Detroit	85	74	6	8
Rochester	85	75	2	6
Minneapolis	83	80	6	6
Pittsburgh	83	75	4	8
Oakland	82	70	4	12
Wichita	82	78	4	5
Chicago	80	74	6	6
Mass. State	78	71	6	10
Philadelphia	77	60	11	14
Boston	73	54	8	13
Washington	61	62	19	12
Baltimore	55	63	14	13

The foregoing table shows a range of unfavorable judgments (positions 1, 2, and 3) on the total program of from 5 per cent. in Wichita and 6 per cent. in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Rochester, to 14 per cent. in Philadelphia and 13 per cent. in Boston and Baltimore, compared with an unfavorable range on comity items alone of from 2 per cent. in Rochester and 4 per cent. in Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Wichita, to 19 per cent. in Washington. The median for the unfavorable judgments of the total program is 7.5 per cent., but for comity only 6 per cent. In ten cities comity was judged more favorably than the total program; in two just as favorably; and in two, Baltimore and Washington, less favorably.

Highly favorable judgments with respect to comity (position 5) range from 55 per cent. in Baltimore to 85 per cent. in Detroit and Rochester; 86 per cent. in Youngstown, and 87 per cent. in St. Louis. The median of judgments in posi-

tion five is 82 per cent. for comity as over against only 74 per cent. on the program as a whole. In twelve cities there are relatively more highly favorable comity judgments than there are favorable judgments on the total program, while

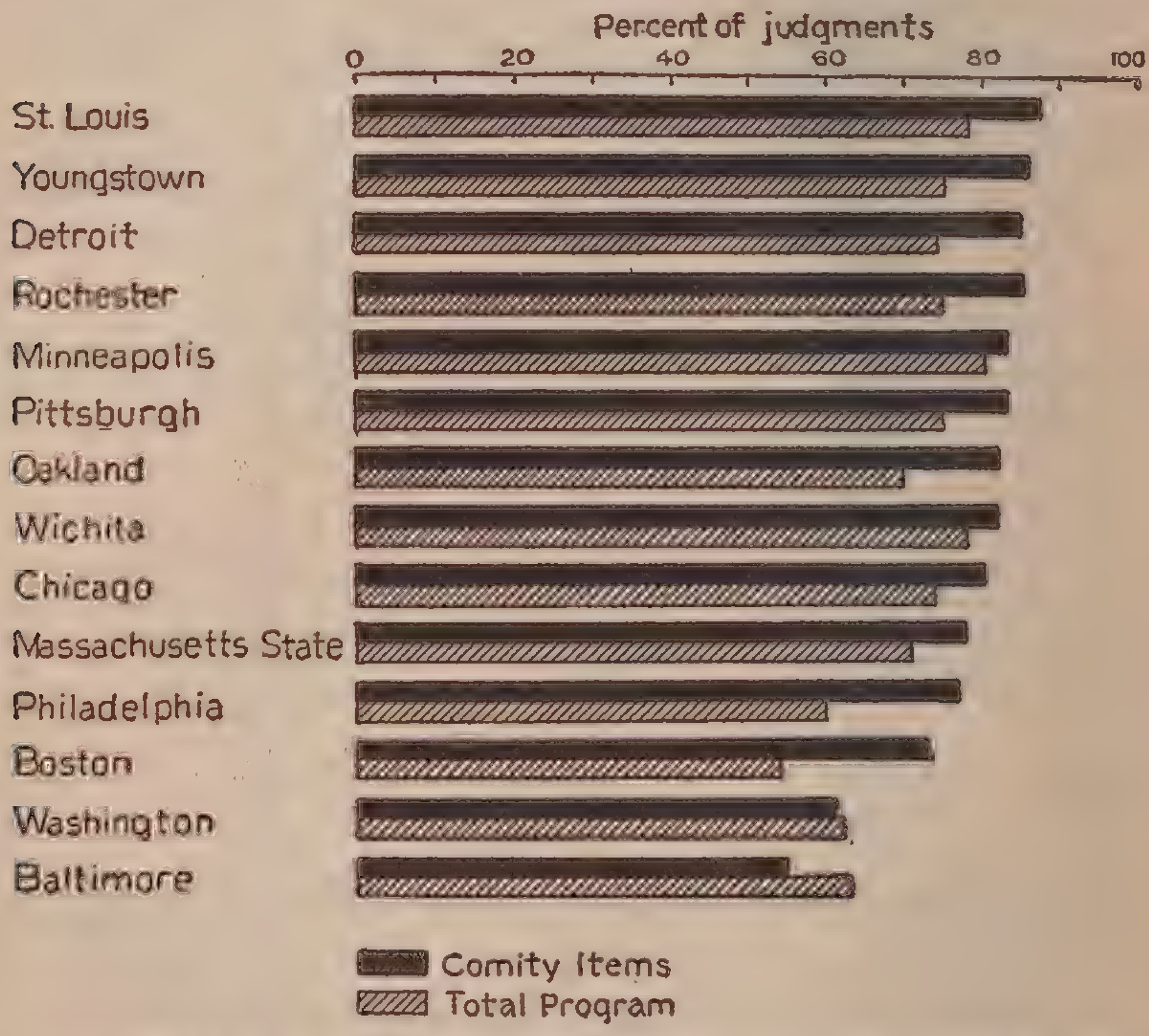


CHART III—FAVORABLE JUDGMENTS OF CONSTITUENTS WITH RESPECT TO COMITY AND WITH RESPECT TO TOTAL PROGRAMS.
Fourteen Church Federations.

there are fewer favorable judgments in only two cities: Baltimore and Washington.

Comparison with other particular functions of federations shows that comity has more favorable sentiment behind it than has any other type of undertaking. Its support is consequently appreciably ahead of that which backs the federation movement as a whole.[5]

[5]A comparison of the functions of the federations in detail will appear in *Protestant Coöperation in American Cities.*

It should be no surprise, however, if the actual contact of comity practices should prove difficult in cities where as many as one-seventh to one-fifth of the federation's constituents judge such practices unfavorably.

THE DENOMINATIONAL FACTOR

That these results are related to, and partly explained by, the denominational composition of constituencies is shown in the following tabulation, showing by denominations the distribution of constituents' opinions as to comity as practiced in the fourteen cities.

TABLE III. JUDGMENTS OF DENOMINATIONAL CONSTITUENCIES OF FOURTEEN FEDERATIONS AND COUNCILS OF CHURCHES AS TO THE APPROPRIATENESS AND IMPORTANCE OF COMITY AS PRACTICED IN CURRENT PROGRAMS

	Per Cent. Distribution of Judgments					
Denominations	*Should not Undertake*	*Questionable*	*Permissible But not Important*	*Somewhat Important*	*Highly Important*	*Total*
Baptist	2	3	4	16	75	100
Congregational	*	1	1	13	85	100
Disciples	4	1	2	13	80	100
Evangelical	0	1	1	10	88	100
Lutheran	6	4	5	21	64	100
Meth. Episcopal	1	2	4	13	80	100
Meth. Protestant	0	1	1	11	87	100
Presbyterian	1	2	2	13	83	100
Protestant Epis.	5	4	6	14	71	100
Reformed	1	1	2	13	83	100
United Presb.	3	0	1	6	90	100
All Other	2	1	3	13	81	100
Total	2	2	3	13	80	100

*Less than half of one per cent.

In order to compare this showing more easily, the denominations have been ranked in the following table: first, according to the per cent. of constituents rendering unfavorable judgments (positions 1 to 3), and second, according to

per cent. of those rendering highly favorable judgments (position 5).

TABLE IV. RANK OF DENOMINATIONS ACCORDING TO PER CENT. OF UNFAVORABLE JUDGMENTS (Column 1) AND ACCORDING TO PER CENT. OF HIGHLY FAVORABLE JUDGMENTS (Column 2), WITH RESPECT TO COMITY

(1) Unfavorable (Positions 1–3)		(2) Highly Favorable (Position 5)	
Denomination	%	*Denomination*	%
Congregational	2	United Presb.	90
Evangelical	2	Evangelical	88
Meth. Prot.	2	Meth. Prot.	87
United Presb.	4	Congregational	85
Reformed	4	Presbyterian	83
Presbyterian	5	Reformed	83
All Other	6	All Other	81
Disciples	7	Disciples	80
Meth. Epis.	7	Meth. Epis.	80
Baptist	9	Baptist	75
Prot. Epis.	15	Prot. Epis.	71
Lutheran	15	Lutheran	64

In comparing Table IV with Table II, one notes first that the range of unfavorable judgments on the part of denominational constituencies is slightly more extreme than the range of the same judgments from city to city; but that the range of favorable judgments is considerably less extreme. Favorable judgments start at a higher level and do not run as low with denominations as they do with cities. There is thus on the whole less difference among denominations relative to comity than there is among cities. When the above rankings of denominations with respect to unfavorable judgments (positions 1 to 3) and with respect to favorable judgments (position 5), are compared, while minor variations appear, the group of denominations occupying the upper fourth of the scale is seen to consist, in the main, of the smaller ones, most of which are not well distributed geographically among American cities.[6] They are, however, unusually well disposed toward comity as practiced in the cities in which they

[7]P. 52.

occur. Their average position is appreciably more favorable than that of the middle group. This middle group includes the very largest denominations. No great variation, either of favorable or unfavorable judgments is shown within it. The lower fourth of the scale, whether it is regarded from the

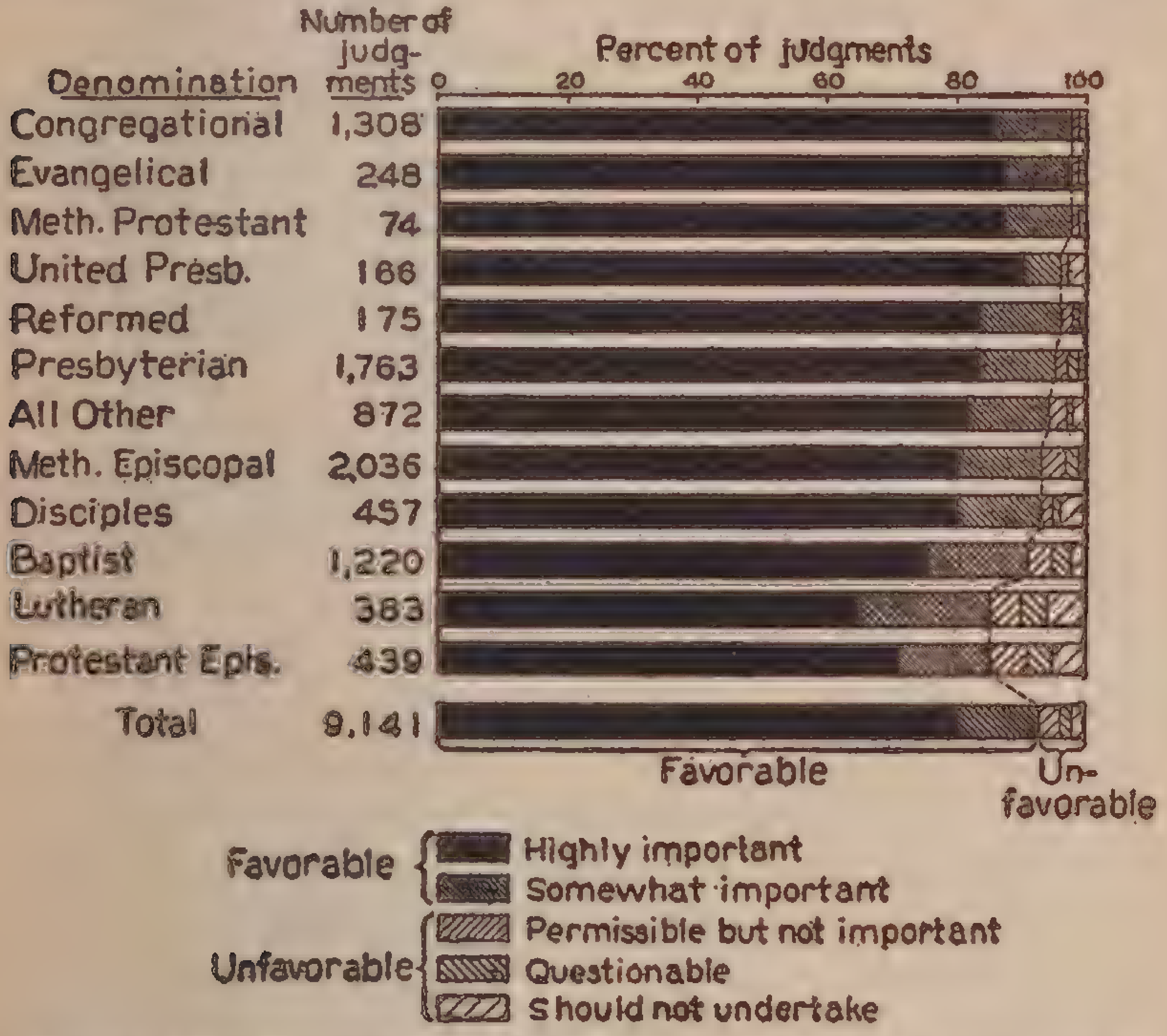


CHART IV—DISTRIBUTION OF JUDGMENTS OF CONSTITUENTS WITH RESPECT TO IMPORTANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS OF COMITY.
Twelve Denominations.

unfavorable or the favorable end, is occupied by the same three denominations, Baptist, Protestant Episcopal, and Lutheran. These denominations are in somewhat sharp contrast with the general tendency, and their judgments stand considerably farther below the average than the upper fourth stands above the average.

When an explanation of the conflicting facts is sought, it should be recognized as obvious that the denominational

factor is not the only one involved in fixing the attitudes of the cities toward comity. The attitudes of the same denominations vary considerably from region to region and from city to city. In a given community it will take on the peculiar coloring of that community. It is therefore possible that low standing of a given city may be due to the relative preponderance there of a group of denominations that tends to think unfavorably about comity. The reverse may also be true. But objective factors actually have weight also. Differences in promotional ability, in administrative skill, and in accidental fortunes with respect to the occurrence of difficult cases all conspire to produce actual differences in the success of comity practice and consequently in the attitudes of constituents in the several cities.

So much for concrete differences. On the other hand, it is known that, in some cities, Protestantism has more, in others less, of the coöperative spirit all along the line. Though an angel from heaven should preach comity in some of them, deep-rooted sectarian biases would resist.

The influence of the several factors may thus be discerned, but the respective contributions cannot be actually segregated. The relative consistency of the denominational factor is evidenced, however, by the fact that the attitude of the several denominations toward comity reflects with fair accuracy the attitude of the same denominations toward federations as a whole;[7] is in entire harmony with their reputations, and is borne out by experience.

At worst, however, and in the least favorable denominations, nearly two-thirds of the expressed sentiment affirms that comity as practiced by church federations is highly important, while the unfavorable judgments never exceed 15 per cent.

CRITICISMS AND CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS

Besides registering attitudes toward comity by the use of schedules with the results exhibited in the foregoing tables, a

[6] *Protestant Coöperation in American Cities.*

rather small number of federation constituents offered further written criticism of the comity idea and its practice by their own federations, or made constructive suggestions as to its better practice. Some of them registered a sense of the difficulty of carrying out comity ideas because of the non-participation of certain Protestant bodies, the Lutherans being particularly mentioned. On the other hand, an occasional Lutheran voice was raised in behalf of Lutheran participation in the allocation of fields.

The majority of suggestions called for an extension of the practice of comity; and of these the larger number urged a more aggressive attempt on the part of federations—in contrast with their present "polite gestures"—to secure actual consolidation of weak churches into stronger units. Typical expressions were: "Cut the number of Protestant churches in two"; "I believe in community churches and the closing out of a number of small, weak churches." Special applications of comity to the problems of foreign Protestant groups, and more definite coöperation of federations with city rescue missions, were also suggested.

Occasional suggestions appeared with reference to comity methods; for example, in a demand for more comprehensive surveys and a more thoroughgoing use of survey results in reaching comity decisions.

Naturally sentiment unfavorable to comity, the existence of which was revealed by the schedules, also found voice in the criticisms offered. The most pointed ground of objection was its alleged interference with denominational rights. A typical utterance along this line is the following: "I am unalterably opposed to the policy of the federation which curtails places of operation for Baptist churches and limits their field." Others say that comity sometimes amounts to "dangerous meddling." All told, however, there is a rather surprising lack of direct attack upon comity, and virtually no criticism except from those whose schedules show that they have small sympathy for the federation movement in general.

The Strength and the Weakness of Comity

What degree, then, of practical authority has comity acquired over the Protestant churches in American cities?

The data as now presented are too varied and inconsistent to permit of a single unqualified verdict.

In spite of favorable general sentiment, comity is rarely so firmly established as not to show frequent signs of feebleness and cowardice when facing actual issues. There are cities in which comity has never got started; others where its hold is so slight that federations have never dared to attempt any comity declaration. Finally come cities where comity has been attempted but has virtually broken down.

Besides making so feeble a show of practical authority, it is tacitly held, in a good many cities, that comity applies primarily if not exclusively to the missionary enterprises of the church. It is a method of preventing undue conflict between weak and dependent institutions in which the average church supporter is not personally concerned, and for which he will not give money if he knows that it is to be spent competitively. But the treasurer of a church federation has been known to look the secretary straight in the eye and say: "This comity business is all very well for small fry, but when it comes to moving our church we've just got to have a location on the Avenue." This limitation cannot be statistically demonstrated but was repeatedly sensed by the investigation as an under-surface factor.

Still another source of weakness is the unequal authority that exists within denominations by reason of divergent forms of government. The tacit assumption is that, while there can be only comity among denominations, there is within each denomination some power to enforce agreements; and that consequently when a denomination has acted through formally appointed representatives its local officials and congregations are virtually bound by their decisions. But this assumption is by no means accepted theoretically

in the more democratically organized denominations. Many of them, holding to the congregational polity, maintain a doctrine of the independence of the local church which makes it impossible to bind such churches by any denominational action to which they have not individually consented. In practice this independence is sometimes asserted, especially by local congregations that are for some reason a little out of step with their own communion. On the whole, however, comity finds less difficulty on this point than might be expected.

In view of such weaknesses it is not strange that the authority of comity is sometimes defied. But this very defiance is testimony to the prestige of comity. It shows that comity cannot be ignored. In most of the cities studied comity has reached the point at which those who do not wish to practice it treat it as something to be evaded rather than defied.

In fact the most dangerous enemy of comity at present is the willingness of some of its ostensible friends to use its forms, while wresting its spirit to their own ends. Thus a sort of senatorial courtesy prevails among the habitually cooperating denominations. This prevents the serious consideration of many issues that do not closely involve the more influential bodies. The evidence shows also a very large proportion of virtually forced decisions that save the face of comity committees but do not reflect their real judgments. Again, the habitually coöperating denominations combine against "outsiders," as represented, for example, by community churches, and irrespective, one sometimes fears, of the welfare of communities. Summing up his impressions of the dominant mood of committees, an experienced federation secretary in immediate charge of comity problems says: "These denominational representatives do not really trust one another. They are continuously suspicious and always on the watchout for something which does not appear on the surface."

Under the principle of proportionate representation comity is virtually controlled by the large denominations. This control by an organizational minority naturally breeds an inclination on the part of others to evade unfavorable decisions by a resort to technicalities. Attempts to "beat the law" by sundry devices are often in evidence. The most frequent and flagrant of these devices is the obvious one of appealing to comity procedures after some practical arrangement has been entered into so far that there is no backing out. But evasions like this become typical only when the social norm which it is sought to evade is fairly well established.

All told, then, both defiance and evasion prove that comity is deeply, though not uniformly, established as a vital principle. Its sanctions are recurrently appealed to and recognized case by case. When denominations have temporarily fallen away from the idea, they have sometimes come back to it with collective humiliation and repentance. Sometimes they have literally confessed their sins to one another and mutually resolved to do better in the future. Profoundly impressive examples of this experience were found.

Again, comity appears as a movement whose sanctions are capable of being locally cultivated by suitable educational means. This is evidenced by the progressive strengthening of declarations and platforms, and the enlarged interpretation of comity in successive comity reports in many cities. There has been marked growth in its practical authority.

Here, then, comity stands as an actually current practice of Protestantism, with varied sanctions. It is going forward with that strengthening and defusing of the feelings and convictions upon which the whole structure rests. One need not expect the process to go so far as to set up among denominations universal comity agreements that will settle once for all and everywhere how they shall conduct their church extension work in common. On the other hand, one cannot escape the evidence of progress, especially as confirmed by other aspects of the investigation.

[illegible]

[illegible] recently agree that the general objectives of society [illegible] the objectives and effective operation of cities. By this is meant the proper planning of individual districts, both with reference to the population and to the needs of the people may be well served [illegible] and every church be given a [illegible] and adequate field for service. In varying phrase, many [illegible] the charges of the [illegible]. One of the best examples and [illegible] of statements is the following from the Minneapolis Council of Churches:

> "The [illegible] problems will have reference, [illegible] aspect of the religious life of the city, with a view to [illegible] the determinations on all proposals for the [illegible] of our [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] a test case, it will be guided by the following [illegible]
>
> "1. Every citizen of Minneapolis regardless of age, sex, or race should have reasonable opportunity to be served by some church.
>
> "2. Every church should have a full sufficiently [illegible] building to call forth every gift and energy of all its members.
>
> "3. Every full should be occupied by some church or religious enterprise which is not [illegible] and which [illegible] of the community."

[illegible] Objectives

In this [illegible] analysis and exposition of society from the [illegible] [illegible] point out that the [illegible] of its major divisions [illegible] a system of objectives consist of church mission [illegible] with two sets: (1) The provision of worshiping [illegible] as the [illegible] of churches as they are located [illegible] in their [illegible] and (2) the [illegible] of the [illegible] that will provide [illegible] in the [illegible] of humanity such

according to a common plan. These two emphases are obviously aspects of a single objective. Statements of the two frequently appear side by side in comity declarations. But most federations tend to stress one at the expense of the other. These distinctions in emphasis divide federations into three groups:

(1) Federations whose comity emphasis is largely negative.

The concern of these federations is with avoiding conflict among denominations over church-extension activities, and in smoothing it out when it occurs. The typical situations involved in these cases are such as the following: A denomination desires to locate a church, or a church desires to change its location with the backing of its denomination. One or more other churches or denominations feel that the proposed action would be injurious to their interests; generally because it would involve competition within the same territory. The function of the federation in the exercise of comity processes is to mediate between the conflicting positions.

This position is formally expressed in the declaration of the Baltimore Federation of Churches:

> "That the sphere of the activities of the Committee on Comity shall be the consideration and attempted adjustment of all problems that may involve misunderstanding between denominations, whether such problems relate to districts over or underchurched or otherwise."

Similarly a statement of the Dayton Council of Churches reads that, in case of objection by any other organization (to the opening of new work by any affiliated denomination), "the question shall be reported to the Council for adjustment."

In all, about one-fourth of the federations studied thus condition the exercise of comity procedures upon the objection of one denomination to something which another undertakes. Unless there is such objection no comity issue is presumed to exist. In some of these cases, however, the actual

practice of comity goes far beyond the letter of the declaration.

(2) Federations in which comity emphasis is positive.

The concern of these federations is that coöperating Protestantism shall make a constructive attack upon the problem of adequate churching for the city. The object in any specific issue is to reach a wise decision, say as to the location of a church. The local church is regarded not as a separate competitive denominational agency, but as one unit among the churching facilities of the community, as an agency existing and functioning in behalf of all. Conflict among churches or denominations, if it exists, is incidental. Comity assumes that all parties are jointly interested in meeting religious needs in behalf of all concerned. One of the most adequate expressions of such a viewpoint is that of the Chicago Church Federation, which maintains a standing committee on Outlook and Policy under the following provision:

> "The Committee on Outlook and Policy shall be charged with the duty of looking forward to and planning for the future conduct and development of cooperative Protestant effort, as carried on through the bodies represented in the Comity Commission, toward the effective churching of Chicago and its environs with the many and widely variant people and conditions to be found therein; and to consider and make recommendations upon all questions that may arise on points of method or policy, with respect to the activities coming under the jurisdiction of this Commission."

Again, the Ohio Council of Churches declares that its purpose is:

> "To so classify neighborhoods economically, racially, socially, educationally, etc., as to determine the kind of program needed for adequate ministration, and the type of building required for carrying out such a program, and to present the facts to local churches and denominations so as to enable them to act intelligently in making provision for such buildings."

The St. Louis Federation also expounds the doctrine of positive comity, at great length. It proposes the allocation, by common action, of responsibility for the churching of all those parts of the city that "require denominational aid for local church equipment and maintenance" such as the down-town districts and areas occupied by foreign communities; and seeks to cover the entire city with "responsibility parishes," each to be served primarily by one church under a common plan.

(3) The third group consists of federations maintaining somewhat equal emphasis upon both the positive and the negative aspect of comity.

This grouping generalizes tendencies that actually reflect themselves in the procedures of groups of federations. But actual classification on this basis is not so simple as the mere comparison of written statements. Practice and theory are not always consistent. Federations that theoretically provide merely for adjustment of conflicts may, and upon occasion do, look ahead and undertake comprehensive plans in common. On the other hand, federations committed to the theory of common planning have to deal with concrete issues, often one at a time, and must grapple with conflict whenever it arises.

Combining the weight of these various factors, a working classification of the federations has been arrived at as follows:

CLASSIFICATION OF FEDERATIONS ACCORDING TO PREVAILING COMITY EMPHASIS

Negative	*Mediating*	*Positive*
Baltimore	Detroit	Chicago
Dayton	Indianapolis	Cleveland
Pittsburgh	Philadelphia	Minneapolis
Washington	Rochester	New York
Wichita	Youngstown	Oakland[8]
		San Francisco[8]
		St. Louis

[8]The Oakland Council of Churches and the San Francisco Federation of Churches both recognize the Home Missions Council of Northern California as their comity committee.

The lines drawn between federations by this classification are confessedly by no means absolute. Some of the federations are moving toward a stronger comity policy than that reflected in their current practice. The reality of the distinctions made is, however, strikingly confirmed by the examination of differences in practice as exhibited in a large number of cases. One can also see such distinctions consciously applied by a federation that has copied most of the language of the comity declarations of some other federation, but has toned it down to match a less positive theory. Indianapolis, for example, borrowed the Minneapolis comity declaration almost verbatim; but with highly significant changes like the following: (1) Minneapolis requires the reference of a comity problem to an investigating committee. Indianapolis specifies this only "when necessary." (2) The definition of adequate churching in the statement of objectives is also toned down. Where Minneapolis undertakes "to have constant oversight of the religious life of the city, with a view to advising the denominations in all proposals" for the location or relocation of churches, Sunday schools, etc., Indianapolis is content to say that "it will advise denominations" in these matters.

The specific consequences of such differences in objectives will be shown in subsequent paragraphs.[9]

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIVES

Since federations are not all aiming at the same version of comity, they are not to be judged by identical standards.

It is easy to assert that the adequate churching of cities through coöperative planning represents a higher level of purpose than the mere settlement of conflicts. In the former case, comity involves the entire field of scientific churchmanship. But this version, in turn, rests on some assumed theory of how adequate churching is to be accomplished. At present, churchmanship as a practical art is by no means uniformly effective. The church is very far from having mas-

[9]Pp. 84ff.

tered urban problems. It knows neither what is wise nor what is advantageous. One of the most grossly false of assumptions is that ecclesiastics have the necessary technique and only need sufficient resources to enable them to put over a successful church program. Of this fallacy, hundreds of foolishly established and mistakenly located churches, dead or dying, should be sufficient evidence.

At present, too, science is able to give only limited assistance to churchmanship. It has not yet watched enough controlled experiments or generalized from a sufficiently large enough number of cases. But progress is beng made by the combination of art and science in church-extension practice. And probably the most vital experience in this entire field is that of the federations themselves in their comity practice.

Comity, then, is not blameworthy when it fluctuates between two levels of theory; nor even where it moves uncertainly and vacillatingly, now attempting to apply the one, now the other, but without sufficient technique or resources for either. When a federation setting out to adjudicate differences between churches shows constant inclination to evade issues, one must set it down to lack of nerve. But unwillingness to profess what one has not the means to carry through is a very different matter. Enough has been done in a few places to show that the practice of positive comity is very much of an undertaking. There's more to it than meets the eye; for example, a philosophy of the city, such as urban sociology is only able to furnish imperfectly; an interpretation of the function of the church such as ecclesiasticism is very poorly prepared to supply; a practical art of churchmanship which is only now in the process of being born. No wonder then that a federation wishes to embark on so difficult a task advisedly, discreetly, and soberly, if at all.

In brief, then, the outstanding problem of objectives is really to comprehend what is involved in the adequate churching of cities. When are there enough churches and not too many? When are churches in the right place and at

the right time? How are churches to be adapted and how related to one another? All pertinent criteria bearing upon such questions and their application need very much fuller examination than they have yet had in a very large number of cases. The answer to some of these questions is being attempted in a subsequent section,[10] and in a report of a survey of comity in Minneapolis.[11]

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[10]Pp. 141ff.

[11]Hallenbeck, *Minneapolis Churches and Their Comity Problems*, (New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1929).

Chapter III

SCOPE AND PARTICIPATION

What range of matters and what kinds of issues are included in comity considerations and actions? And who participate in them?

Comity declarations generally enumerate the main aspects of church extension with which they expect to be concerned. The majority of federations mention from three to seven items, among which the location and relocation of churches are virtually always included. Next in frequency of mention are the organization of Sunday schools, the purchase of property for church sites, the taking of options upon property, or changes in the character of a church's program, as illustrated in the initiation of services in a foreign language for a special racial group.

A fairly comprehensive statement of the scope of comity is that of the Chicago Church Federation, as follows:

> "Any denomination, local church, local group or individual wishing to start a new work in any field shall present a request in writing to the Comity Commission through the Fields Committee before any decisive action looking in the direction of establishing work, such as organizing a group, renting a meeting place or purchasing property, shall have been taken, and shall await the action of the Commission before proceeding. Any church wishing to change its location within its community or to alter radically the character of its program of service, such as providing for work for other racial or language groups than those theretofore served, shall present its request to the Comity Commission in the same manner as is provided above for those wishing to begin new work."

The scope of comity naturally varies according to the version of its objectives which a given federation adopts. With a broad conception, comity may hesitate at nothing that is found to be involved in coöperative church planning. In the most general terms, comity will include all measures necessary to develop and promulgate an adequate theory for dealing with practical issues, as well as all sorts of practical issues as they may arise for adjudication. Under these conditions comity will have a legislative phase as well as administrative and judicial phases. Even when comity professes to aim merely to avoid competition, the range of issues it finds involved is very great.

Analyzing further the considerations that underlie enumerations of matters with which comity is concerned, one discovers that they are sometimes logical and sometimes chronological. When the considerations are logical, enumerations attempt to pick out the situations that are most vital and pivotal. It is obvious that a good many aspects of church extension may be conceived of from different viewpoints. Thus a church may be regarded as originating in the organization of a group of people who shall compose it; or in the taking of measures for securing equipment or property; or in the determination of a geographical field of activity (a parish); or in the initiating of preliminary forms of activity, such as the starting of a Sunday school. Instead of enumerating these various aspects of church extension, certain federations cover all under a blanket term by saying that comity concerns the initiation of any church enterprise or form of organized activity.

When the underlying considerations are chronological, comity declarations try to cover the typical series of stages that an ecclesiastical enterprise passes through from the first conception of the idea to its full establishment. A few declarations assert that the rights of comity run "ever afterward," as in the following example: "If at any time, in the judgment of any member of the Committee, a church or denomination is not adequately undertaking a task as-

signed to it, the entire matter may be brought up for consideration in the Comity Committee."

In contrast with these enumerations, the catalogue of actual comity concerns runs all the way from putting pressure upon an itinerant Negro, with a view to frightening him out of a begging campaign in behalf of a superfluous church, to negotiations covering years and involving the relocation of an entire group of the city's largest churches.

But all specifications as to the scope of comity put together do not include as many aspects of church extension as were found in a single city in a single year as shown in chapter I.[1]

It accordingly becomes pertinent to inquire into the actual scope of comity as practiced, and to note the frequency with which the matters with which it is concerned actually appear.

VARIETY OF CASES

What comity actually includes within its formal jurisdiction has been ascertained by a study of 283 cases appearing in thirteen cities, of which the records were sufficiently definite to show what kinds of situations were involved. Seventy per cent. of these cases related to the location of new churches, 20 per cent. to the relocation of old churches, and 5 per cent. to the establishment of Sunday schools. The remaining 5 per cent. were scattered among such situations as the establishment of branch churches or missions, the consolidation of two or more churches, the transfer of a church's allegiance from one denomination to another, or to radical changes in types of church work. In some of the exceptional cases comity ventured into quite unexpected realms, as when a federation commended a struggling church to its own denomination for financial assistance.

The terms in proposals relative to the establishment of churches made to the comity committee of the Chicago Church Federation carry out further distinctions. Thus

[1]Pp. 4 and 5.

only four out of thirty-one cases involving this issue concerned the approval of church sites. Six concerned the assignment of parish areas; while twenty-one proposed surveys in which both site and territory to be served were left open for determination in the light of the investigation. This, however, is unusual. Churches asking approval of their proposals are generally required to be specific, either as to the site or as to the territory to be served.

When federations were compared according to the types of comity emphasis distinguished in the previous section, very interesting variations with respect to the frequency of given situations were found. Thus relocation became a comity problem with relative greatest frequency in cities whose interpretation of comity is most comprehensive. This may be explained in part by the fact that New York and Chicago are both included in this category, and that the pressure of urban change requiring relocation may have been more intense in these greatest of cities. But it is also true that other cities whose theory of comity is broad include a wider range of transactions beyond church location and relocation; and also that these other matters make up a higher proportion of their total transactions. On the contrary, where comity is narrowly defined, its practice concerns almost nothing beyond church location and relocation. Taking an average of all cities, 90 per cent. of cases concern these two matters; but in the cities whose definition of comity is broadest the proportion is only 80 per cent.

The clearest distinction between broad and narrow definitions of the scope of comity is exhibited in certain provisions concerning churches that change the kind of work they do without relocating. Thus Chicago provides that a church desiring "to alter radically the character of its program of service, such as providing for work for other racial or language groups than those theretofore served, shall present its request to the Comity Commission in the same manner as is provided above for those wishing to begin new work." This is specifically denied by certain other

federations. At this point then, differences of theory quite definitely affect differences in practice.[2]

An outstanding problem is whether comity should be concerned with the fraternal quality of the relations of churches to one another, after they have been established by the common consent. Does it imply a sort of interchurch court of equity? This issue was distinctly raised in the following proselyting case in Rochester. Here, by action of the comity committee, a church has been permitted to locate in an area previously exclusively served by another church. The older church now complains that the new church is urging the former's members to secure transfers of membership, is soliciting support and attendance from persons who have for years been attached to the older church, and is trying to build up its Sunday school at the expense of the older Sunday school. Consequently the older church formally protests to the church federation and resolves "that until such time as the above unfriendly competitive practices have ceased the church will withhold all support from the Federation of Churches." This, a perfectly logical action in view of the previous comity decision though hardly a loyal one, inevitably raises the question of how far comity practice will carry the churches. Will it oblige them to appear in *ex parte* procedures in denominational courts, seeking to get their decisions enforced; or, as previously suggested, will the churches constitute their own courts to which they will summon the adherents of the coöperating denominations in matters involving fraternal relations, not limiting them to the field of church extension? Whatever be the answer to these challenges, it is certain that comity cannot stand still.

Here, then, is an obviously wide and widening field. The mantle of comity is being extended so rapidly that it is already pulled thin. Its practice has come to include about all, if not more than all, that it is competent to handle, considering the strength of its present sanctions.

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[2]Pp. 64ff.

Participation

Who are included in comity processes? Because, as has already been noted, the federation movement is not inclusive of all Protestant churches, comity finds two church groups whose church extension measures have to be considered, namely, the insiders and the outsiders. Curiously, however, outsiders do sometimes participate in its processes.

While comity declarations rarely state who are entitled to participate in comity processes, it is of course assumed that denominations eligible to and active in other functions of the federations are included.

Considering these insiders first, it is to be noted that participation has to be regarded quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The actual number of comity issues that may concern a given denomination in a given year obviously depend upon its size and the amount of its extension activity. Certain small denominations showing a great devotion to the federation idea in general are so rarely concerned in a church-extension problem that they do not get accustomed to comity processes, and sometimes fail to resort to them when they should.

Again there is a type of inside-outsider. Certain denominations will keep membership in comity committees and attend when they think it is profitable for them to do so; but they may not submit themselves to the advice and decision of the coöperating group as fully as the majority do. The indefinite nature of the comity tradition, and the absence of specific agreements, permit such playing of fast and loose. The other denominations tolerate it because it is sometimes better than outright competition, and in the hope that even such loose ties may gradually be strengthened.

Denominational Distribution of Comity Cases

With these general clues, an account of the degree of actual participation in comity by the coöperating denominations is in order.

Formal comity cases may originate in two ways. They may arise out of proposals made or initiative taken by denominational churches or their representatives on comity committees; or in initiative taken by the comity committee itself in behalf of the entire body of coöperating Protestants. In the 417 cases studied in sixteen cities, nearly nine-tenths originated in the former way and about one-tenth in the latter.

In these 417 cases, the proposals, or the specific situations out of which the cases originally arose, concerned twenty-five denominations distributed as follows: Presbyterian, seventy-four; Methodist Episcopal, sixty-three; Baptist (Northern), forty-seven; Reformed (two bodies), twenty-four; Evangelical, twenty-three; Congregational, twenty-two; United Presbyterian, twenty; Lutheran (chiefly United), sixteen; Protestant Episcopal, fifteen; Disciples, thirteen; Methodist Protestant, nine; United Brethren, nine; Gospel Missions (Undenominational), eight; Reformed Episcopal, three; Presbyterian, U. S., three; Church of God, two; Greek Orthodox, two; Methodist Episcopal, South, two; Friends, one; Salvation Army, one; Volunteers of America, one; Moravian, one; Advent Christian, one; African Methodist Episcopal, one. The distribution just shown is not a legitimate basis for a comparison of denominations as to their loyalty to comity. It could have no direct significance without a previous calculation of their relative strength in the cities concerned. Even then, unequal capacities and resources for church extension would have to be considered, since it is out of such activities that comity issues naturally arise. Finally, the cases studied in some cities covered a longer period than those studied in others.

It is nevertheless significant to observe that 88 per cent. of all cases of comity fall to ten denominations, each of which shows more than ten cases (the actual range being from thirteen to seventy-four cases); while the remaining 12 per cent. are distributed among fifteen denominations.

Within the ten denominations furnishing so large a major-

ity of the cases, it is fairly evident that, relative to size and presumable capacity for expansion, some denominations practice comity more frequently than others. Some of the smaller denominations of this group, like the Congregational, Evangelical, and United Brethren show more cases than their numerical rank calls for; while such denominations as the Lutheran and the Protestant Episcopal show less. This showing approximately corresponds with variations in general participation in federation's affairs.[3]

Exactly how many and what denominations were affected by the comity measures whose initiation has just been tabulated cannot be ascertained. Cases once started tend to draw in secondary participants. Only a minority of cases originate in direct issues between some church that proposes a location or relocation and one or more other churches that object to it. In Rochester, for example, only eight out of twenty-six cases examined were of this direct sort. The others drew in churches and denominations concerned only with their more remote or general consequences. Thus, in one type of recurrent cases, the essence of the situation is that one party cherishes vague expectations, while another party makes indefinite and contingent suggestions. If either ever came to the point of concrete proposals they would be likely to conflict. And even in their shadowy and embryonic stage, although no specific objector appears (because no church is far enough along in its plans to assume the rôle of the second party), the feeling of conflict may involve whole groups of churches. The denominational representative, for example, may raise a question and be heard. In another set of cases, groups of churches, only one or two of which are actually affected, may join sympathetically in a protest against another church in the same community. Accordingly more churches appear as objectors than have real individual grounds for objection. The scope of conflicting interests is artificially exaggerated.

All told, then, the number of churches and denominations

[3]See *Protestant Coöperation in American Cities.*

involved in the consequences of comity proposals and made a party to them through their representatives cannot be statistically determined.

FORTUNES OF THE SMALL DENOMINATIONS

The small denominations, whose participation in the total practice of comity is exceedingly small, present some special situations. They include a number that are in full standing in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ and are commonly active in other aspects of local federation work. But their churches are few, and they so rarely found new ones that they sometimes come to feel that comity does not concern them. They may then even neglect to submit themselves to comity processes in the rare cases in which they figure.

Two quite divergent attitudes toward the small denominations appear in connection with comity practices. Some federations appear to feel that, since the number of issues which they represent are so few, small denominations may be virtually ignored. Says an experienced secretary: "The small denominations are harmless. Under present conditions they have a right to exist and they are virtually compelled to locate wherever they can, almost irrespective of the existing churches. I would not try to regulate them according to ordinary comity principles." On the other hand, certain federations have deliberately made room for the small denominations, especially in the division of fields after a wholesale survey. (The attempt at such a survey generally signifies that there are plenty of fields to go around, and there have been some indications that the fields offered the small denominations are frequently difficult ones.) On the whole, however, the two contrasting attitudes have been reflected in the feelings of the little denominations. In some cities they feel ignored; while in others they look to the federation as their protector and as the only warrant that they will ever get a square deal at the hands of their overshadowing competitors.

COMITY WITH OUTSIDERS

The actual practice of comity is frequently a good deal broader than the constitutional limitation of membership in federations. Outsiders participate as well as insiders, sometimes occasionally and intermittently but sometimes regularly, with certain reservations and limitations.

Outsiders may be such because they are excluded by the constitutions of federations. They may be excluded because they belong to the wrong denominations; or because they belong to none; or because they are not churches at all. This analysis determines the topics to be followed in the further investigation.

PARTICIPATION BY EXCLUDED DENOMINATIONS

When denominations excluded from the general fellowship of federations participate in comity processes, they do so, it goes without saying, on their own initiative. Only the most extreme warrant of community injury would lead a federation to summon to comity counsels those whom it has declined to associate with itself in other matters. Comity is, however, so advantageous that organizations of the excluded denominations occasionally seek some participation in it. Thus, a Unitarian church, excluded by the usage of a federation, may ask for advice and aid in seeking a new location, and may get it. In other words, the expert services of comity leaders are somewhat widely taken advantage of, although the fact does not figure in the study of formal cases.

PARTICIPATION BY SELF-EXCLUDED DENOMINATIONS

In numerous departments of federation work, denominations that are self-excluded from full membership are welcomed to share in such activities as they find helpful. Self-exclusion most frequently rests back upon larger denominational attitudes toward the federation movement as centralized in the Federal Council of Churches. Local churches of

denominations that are not members of the Federal Council, or that adhere only partially and with reservations, thus frequently join in only part of the life of local federations. In other cases, the self-excluded local church belongs to a denomination that has full membership in the Federal Council, but itself has simply failed to join the local federation.

A typical case arising out of such a situation occurred in Toledo. A Methodist church was assigned a building site. A congregation of the Church of God, which though belonging denominationally to the Federal Council, was not in the membership of the local federation, challenged this action as an invasion of its field. In this case, the federation replied that it could not consider a protest from a non-member denomination. But certain other federations definitely state that non-member churches are to be considered in the assignment of fields as well as those of coöperating denominations, irrespective of whether they protest or not.

Churches whose local self-exclusion reflects the general attitudes of their denominations frequently find considerable embarrassment in the sphere of comity, and practice it in a sort of left-handed fashion. Episcopal churches, for example, are frequently willing to confer with other churches through comity committees in cases where their action has been felt to conflict with the interests of the other churches. In other cases, they may sometimes accept adverse judgments as intrinsically reasonable. They may systematically report their church-extension decisions to comity committees after the event; but (except as to occasional congregations that coöperate independently) they are rarely willing to submit their plans in advance to see whether they are going to conflict and how they can integrate with general plans. Most of the Lutheran bodies are still less completely participant in comity processes. In New York City, for example, four or five of the twelve or thirteen separate Lutheran ecclesiastical bodies are attempting to work out comity agreements among themselves. They then notify the New York federation of

their allocation of communities to the several Lutheran groups, but without submitting their action for discussion or review.

Obviously federations are likely to discover difficulties in thus allowing any denomination to play fast and loose with comity processes. The natural tendency is for such a denomination to appeal to such processes when it is to its advantage to do so, but to refuse to do so ordinarily. Thus a representative of a denomination practicing left-handed comity was invited by courtesy to sit on a comity committee. Here he seemed to his brethren to function as a sort of a spy, discovering the plans of the other denominations and using the information to the advantage of his own, without assuming the corresponding responsibilities.

The lot of the inside-outsider is thus far from enviable. Instances were found in which the representative of a denomination occupying this position said frankly, "This is the best I can do. If you'd rather have no comity at all from my body, I'll resign." The reply invariably was "No, stay with us. Half-comity is better than none." Moreover, in a number of cases, actual progress toward comity appears to have been made through the nursing along of highly illogical situations. A denomination plays fast and loose but gradually comes to find itself more and more fast as its habits of coöperation develop.

It need not be argued from these examples that infinitely slow progress is to be tolerated; nor that the obligations of comity should not be clearly defined and incisively urged. If they are not, it will be difficult to get anyone to take comity seriously.

NON-DENOMINATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES

In the course of the practice of comity, very far-reaching problems have arisen concerning the eligibility and participation of non-denominational or interdenominational religious

agencies. Their problems have emerged primarily around two issues; first, that of the recognition of community churches as competent to receive assignments of fields and to have protection in them as against denominational churches; and second, that of interdenominational work undertaken under the federation's own auspices. No definite trends in these respects have developed. The evidence is consequently confined to a few cases; and for an understanding of these some renewed reference to the general background of comity is necessary.

The federation movement is of course primarily a form of organized coöperation among denominational churches. Comity largely originated with, and is still primarily in the hands of, professional church-extension executives. The conception and program of the adequate churching of cities to which comity policies almost always implicitly refer assume that this result will be reached by the peaceful and coöperative extension of denominational units. In short, the general trend of the movement is strongly against the non-denominational community church.

What then shall be done in a case like the following? A city neighborhood asks a comity committee to start a Sunday school for its children. The committee asks that some one of its constituent denominations undertake the responsibility. All refuse. The community therefore starts its own Sunday school interdenominationally. What status shall comity ascribe to this enterprise now or in case it should grow into a church?

Only a few comity declarations deal explicitly with such problems. Thus the comity statement of the Ohio Council of Churches somewhat mildly says: "As a rule denominational enterprises are to be preferred over union or federated churches." The majority of statements, however, are more positive. Thus the Detroit comity declaration reads: "It is our conviction that whenever a church is organized it should ally itself with one of the existing denominations instead of remaining an isolated unit." Resolutions passed in connection

with specific cases frequently contain a much more vigorous repudiation of the community church idea.

Occasionally comity cases have arisen out of the definite effort of a comity committee to bring a community church into line, denominationally speaking. Thus Rochester takes a union Sunday school under its wing, saying that it will coöperate with it "until it can be placed in the care of some denomination." In other cases, measures have been taken to compel a reluctant union church to ally itself with some denomination.

GUARDED RECOGNITION OF THE COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Chicago and Cleveland federations are exceptional in recognizing a possible place for the interdenominational community church. Both have recognized such churches and are on formal record as undertaking to aid and direct them under specified conditions. The pertinent action of these two federations is herewith quoted at length.

In the case of the Chicago Federation of Churches, there was prolonged preliminary study of the community-church problem by a subcommittee, which declared: "It is highly desirable that the churches at once undertake more daring forms of unity as the means of progress. One way would be the development of union or unity churches under denominational direction." On December 7, 1927, the comity committee took favorable action on the following resolution:

> "RESOLVED, That the Outlook and Policy Committee recommends to the Comity Commission the adoption of the following statement and plan with respect to the entering of new fields under certain conditions:
>
> "1. The Comity Commission recognizes that in the development of new fields there may be found cases wherein a denominational church is not acceptable to the community, and notwithstanding that the Commission believes in and is committed to the establishment of denominational churches as preferable in ac-

cordance with the statement of principles recently adopted, it cannot be indifferent to the situations which may arise wherein, due to community conditions, denominational churches cannot wisely be advocated.

"2. When in the judgment of the Fields Committee a case is found wherein the establishment of a denominational church is not feasible, the Fields Committee shall thereupon recommend to the Comity Commission that such a field be placed under the jurisdiction of a new committee to be called the Undenominational Church Committee, to be a standing committee of not less than seven members.

"3. The duties of the Undenominational Church Committee shall be:

"(a) To consider only such cases as shall be assigned to it by the Comity Commission.

"(b) This committee shall seek to establish fraternal relations with the communities so referred to it, by appointing at least one representative to maintain helpful relations with such community, and to report back to the committee from time to time with respect to conditions, needs, etc.

"(c) It shall be understood that the relation of this Undenominational Church Committee is advisory only, for the purposes of strengthening and encouraging any church organization which is in existence or is to be brought into existence, serving such a community; and that this advisory relation shall be continued only so long as it is welcome and fruitful.

"(d) To study, gather facts, and keep the Comity Commission informed with regard to all essential features relative to the undenominational churches with which the committee has contact.

"4. In order that no false expectations shall be aroused from this approach and coöperation, such undenominational churches shall have it brought clearly to their attention that:

"(a) Under the organization of our Comity Commission, no financial help which would have to come from denominational sources can be expected and that—

"(b) There is a desire on the part of the Comity Commission to help in every possible way any sincere body of Christian people in its ministry, in its educational and benevolent program, in its organization, and in any other way by which our common cause may be furthered.

"5. It is recognized that this plan is only a beginning, and is adopted in the spirit of opportunists, because we are considering actual conditions and needs and with the hope that it shall lead to better and wider development and fellowship."

THE CLEVELAND PLAN

The Cleveland Federated Churches have recently taken even more advanced ground. In January, 1928, this organization issued a statement on "New Comity Relationships" which proposed the creation of a united board of trustees for church-extension work with its "own program and budget," as follows:

"The new Plan for closer comity relationships is a proposal to study the whole church extension task in Cuyahoga County in the broadest and most comprehensive way, with a view to formulating a more effective program for undertaking that task. Hundreds of families are lost to the church every year by removals into new residence communities. The denominational church-extension boards do not feel warranted in establishing new mission enterprises in communities where there are only a very few of their respective families. But something should be done to save these families to the church.

"The new Plan provides for the appointment of a United Board of Trustees, each denomination approving the Plan being represented by two members. The Board will keep in touch with the growing new residence communities in Cuyahoga County and upon discovering needs for Sunday-school services and services of worship will undertake to meet those needs. The United Board will first of all ascertain whether one

of the denominations is ready to start an enterprise on the field.

"If none of the denominations are in a position to begin the work, the United Board may take such steps as in its judgment seem best to meet the situation until one of the denominations is ready to take over this responsibility. Every field brought to the attention of the Board will be given the most careful consideration and all decisions will be arrived at by the exercise of most conscientious Christian intelligence and good will. It is not the intention of the United Board to discourage or in any way to interfere with the church-extension plans of the various denominations. The primary purpose of the Board will always be to insure religious instruction for every child and a service of worship for every adult in Cuyahoga County. It is an agency by which the churches will undertake certain of their common tasks together. The United Board of Trustees will formulate its own program and budget. It will not commit the denominations to any project until it has first secured the approval of the denominational boards."

The Chicago and Cleveland declarations thus agree in definitely recognizing community churches as sometimes eligible for recognition and for joint promotion by the denominational forces coöperating in federations. These organizations themselves are overwhelmingly denominational, and such recognition is obviously a possible means of the control of the community church. Nevertheless, the substitution of a positive for a negative policy toward such churches is a circumstance of no small moment.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL WORK UNDER FEDERATION AUSPICES

The cases of interdenominational enterprises administered and supported by church federations directly are exceptionally rare. The Chicago federation, however, maintains interdenominational Chinese and Filipino churches, assisted in their support by subsidies granted by the several coöperat-

ing denominations. The Wichita Council of Churches has sponsored a Mexican Church, and Dayton a settlement house; but these have been regarded rather as cases of coöperative social work than as raising comity problems.

COMITY INCLUDING NON-ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANIZATIONS

The confused and competitive relationships of the various downtown "rescue missions" and similar organizations have presented serious problems in many cities. Eight cases of comity involving such missions appear in the list of those studied; and the Salvation Army and the Volunteers of America furnish each one case. But the intervention of comity processes in this realm has been chiefly informal. Only a few federations make such missions directly eligible to membership in federations; and comity procedures relating to them generally have arisen in some effort of the established denominations to regulate the appeal of the mission for financial assistance. A few federations have, however, been working patiently with the rescue mission situation from the standpoint of general policy for long periods of time, and have sometimes succeeded in making the practices of the missions less objectionable than they would otherwise have been.

The foregoing review of the more general aspects of comity yields a lively sense of the reality and vigor of the phenomena with which it is associated. Here is a certain spiritual momentum toward practical coöperation in church extension, growing out of the situation in which a divided Protestantism finds itself in the modern city. This urgency of spirit finds substance in the machinery of joint planning and decision. Its forms are gradually assuming definiteness and clarity. Its goal is broadly defined, yet objective enough to determine the direction of the movement. All this reinforces the tentative verdict of chapter I: Here is something at once dramatic and significant for Protestantism, something to be reckoned with, though what it shall ultimately be does not yet appear fully.

Chapter IV

COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEE PROCESSES

Federations characteristically employ in the field of comity the identical form of administrative machinery which they employ in other fields. Here is the same typical committee or commission constituting a small representative face-to-face group which reaches decisions after discussion.

But the familiar machinery functions differently because it has work of a different kind to do. Comity is not practiced in behalf of any constituency of individuals. It does not gather people together to evangelize or teach them, nor does it bring direct benefit to them as individuals in the way that much of social service does.

Comity has rather to do with the creation and distribution of churches and with the relations of churches to one another. These are the fundamental ecclesiastical issues. They touch directly the very units out of which federations are formed and involve the largest values whether of prestige or of property. All other forms of coöperation in federations are among churches as agencies; hence they are logically secondary to that coöperation which controls the very existence of churches; and few other activities actually effect such a weight of practical consequences by their decisions.

The formal methods by which comity is practiced reflect its special character. Through its committees it hears cases of controversy between churches; it makes investigations relative to these cases; it bears many of the aspects of a court; it listens to appeals; it renders verdicts. In so doing it has developed systematic processes as no other department of federation work has done, and has created rules and prec-

edents to which it refers. In brief, in the field of comity the committee system has to do what it is not called upon to do in any other field.

In comity committees working under these conditions, mere personality differences, such as those between fighters and conciliators, or radicals and conservatives, as well as most of the more subtly theoretical, idealistic, or aesthetic differences that exercise the minds of members of other committees, are compelled to take second place. Crude differences involved in representativeness, as concerned with institutional and material values, bulk the largest as factors influencing decisions.

It is in the light then of its particular functions that the machinery of comity has now to be considered.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The typical member of a comity committee is a denominational representative. He is entrusted with the guardianship of denominational interests, as related both to prestige and to property. His representative character is not concealed or repressed, but is rather explicit and outspoken. This makes for a watchdog psychology. It is minds with a set like this which have to be adjusted, whose thinking has to be integrated through committee processes.

Moreover, guardianship of denominational interests tends to get exercised through exchanges of influence. Denominational representatives habitually act upon the formula, "You favor me here and I'll favor you there." In brief, a trading psychology, like that of Congressmen, is added to the watchdog psychology. This tends to create a pork-barrel atmosphere in which the advantage in comity decisions gets passed around among the coöperating denominations somewhat in proportion to their weight in securing advantages for others.

Finally, many of the conflicts with which comity deals are characterized by particularly high tension, because of the

magnitude and fundamental character of the interests at stake.

These considerations make the study of the machinery of comity and the external forms of its practice of exceeding importance, and especially so in view of the possible bearings of routine methods and devices upon the vital unification of mental processes in committees and the prestige of their ultimate decisions.

Comity Committees

Sixteen comity committees were included in the study representing seventeen cities. They have a total of 318 members. The number ranges from three to forty-nine, the median size being seventeen. About three-fourths of the cases fall into well-marked groups, namely: four with nine to eleven members, five with sixteen to twenty members, and three with forty-two to forty-nine members.

All these committees attempt to be representative of the denominational bodies coöperating in church federations. But, as an analysis of constitutions and by-laws shows, federations use various means in seeking to accomplish this end.

The narrowest type of comity committee, illustrated by Pittsburgh, is virtually confined to paid executives of denominational extension boards. These officials may be considered as the natural representatives of their denominations in relations with other churches. Comity, it is to be remembered, in most commissions, concerns not the general ecclesiastical authorities but rather certain employing, property-holding and bill-paying boards specializing in church extension. Consequently all types of committees give large places to extension executives, except in cities where not many of such officials reside.

In addition to paid executives, the broadest type of comity committee provides for denominational representation, lay and clerical, from each coöperating body, frequently in

numbers proportionate to each body's numerical strength; and may also include additional members at large. Denominational representatives are officially designated to the committee by their respective bodies. Chicago, for example, gives each denomination three appointees, while St. Louis makes the number proportionate to the number of churches in each participating denomination.

The mediating type of committee, as illustrated by Minneapolis, consists of denominational representatives, clerical and lay, together with executive members in somewhat nearly equal numbers. The denominations frequently have equal representation irrespective of size, and there is no membership at large. A typical by-law constituting a committee of this type reads:

> "The committee shall consist of the official of each denomination whose duties include supervision of missionary work and church-extension work within the city, together with a pastor and a layman from each of such (coöperating) denominations."

A variant version of the mediating-type committee is exhibited by Cleveland, which organizes its committee as follows:

> "The comity committee shall be composed of representatives of the denominational Church Extension Societies of Greater Cleveland, each organization being entitled to three members. Where such denominations do not exist, denominational representation shall be given by the Executive Committee of the Federated Churches."

The majority of federations follow some such mediating pattern.

There is a fourth small group of committees that are not constituted on the basis of denominational designation, nor directly from persons regarded as denominational representatives. Membership is rather drawn from unofficial persons of special capacity and ability. They are naturally dis-

tributed so as to include most of the coöperating denominations, but are not proportionately distributed. In this sense they are members at large, representing the total constituency. An occasional expert in city planning or populational statistics, not chosen on the official or denominational basis, may be added to a committee in the broader type of organization.



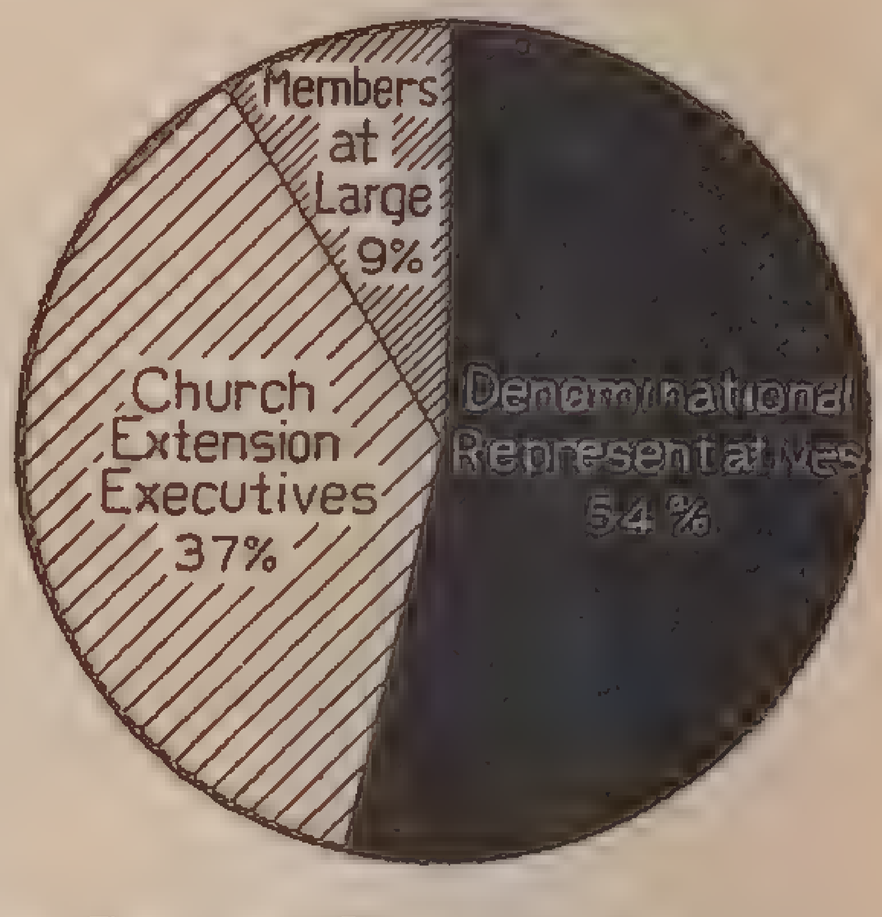


CHART V—COMPOSITION OF COMITY COMMITTEES.

The actual composition of committees in the sixteen cases studied is shown in the following table:

TABLE V. COMPOSITION OF COMITY COMMITTEES

Composition	MEMBERS *No.*	*Per Cent.*
Total	318	100
Denominational Representatives	172	54
Church-extension Executives	116	37
Members at Large	30	9

Of the denominational representatives, 115 are ordained ministers, and 87 are laymen, while of the church-extension executives all but one are ordained ministers. This gives a total of 230 clergymen out of the 318 committee members, or 72 per cent., as against 28 per cent. laymen. The eighty-eight laymen are divided occupationally as follows: Commerce and trade, forty-one; professional callings, thirty; industrial, eleven; clerical, two; unknown occupation, four.

When the actual names are scrutinized, it appears that comity committees rarely appoint members merely on account of their prestige or wealth. Standing in the particular sphere of church extension is the prime qualification.

Lay denominational representatives dominate numerically in the cases of six committees; church-extension executives dominate numerically in eight cases and occur in approximately equal numbers with laymen in three more. Members at large (present in only five cities) dominate numerically in two cases. In three cities no particular trend is observable.[1]

RACE, SEX, AND AGE

All but one of the 318 members of comity committees are white, and all but one are men. The modal age of members in committees for which this item was studied was from forty to forty-nine in three cases, fifty to fifty-four in six cases, and fifty-five to sixty in two cases. Since it is known from other studies that the average city minister is a man in middle life, it is probably not strange that the age of outstanding leadership in a group dominated by city ministers should be above fifty in so high a proportion of cases.

DENOMINATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

For three reasons the denominational distribution of the 318 cases does not constitute ground for direct comparison. First, because denominations are unevenly distributed in the cities under consideration; second, because representation is frequently unequal, being based upon relative numerical strength; and third, because denominations do not participate equally in comity processes. The following table showing the actual denominational distribution consequently serves

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[1]In 1925 the Ministers' Association of Eastern Delaware County (Philadelphia suburbs) resolved "that the interests of comity would be furthered if denominational representatives on comity commissions were not professionally engaged in church-extension work."

simply as a summary of the facts. The contribution of the above-mentioned factors to the situation cannot be separately untangled:

TABLE VI. DENOMINATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERS OF COMITY COMMITTEES IN FIFTEEN CITIES

Total	318
Baptist	30
Congregational	28
Disciples	19
Evangelical (two bodies)	19
Lutheran (chiefly United)	17
Methodist Episcopal (including 8 Meth. Epis. South)	51
Presbyterian (including 2 Presb. U. S.)	34
Protestant Episcopal	22
Reformed (2 bodies)	19
United Presbyterian	11
Seven other denominations belonging to Federal Council	49
Unitarian	3
Universalist	1
Unknown	15

YEARS IN FEDERATION SERVICE

The experience of members of comity committees in general federation work was measured in 146 cases in eight cities with results as follows:

Number of Years on Federation Committees	*Number of Members*	*Per Cent.*
Total	146	100
1	39	27
2–3	49	34
4–5	37	25
6–7	17	14
8–9	1	
10 or more	3	

While three-fifths of the total number of members studied showed an experience of not more than three years in federation service, two-fifths had had a longer period of service than the average tenure of a minister in a city pastorate. The total showing would seem to indicate a fair degree of continuity for a group so largely dominated by city ministers.

INTEGRATION

The degree with which membership in comity committees overlapped other forms of committee participation in church federations was studied in the cases of 237 members. Of these, 109, or 47 per cent., belonged to at least one other federation committee. The distribution of these additional committee memberships was as follows:

Number of Committees	*Number of Members*
Total	109
1	50
2	39
3	11
4 or more	9

(This showing omitted a few cases of federation presidents who are ex-officio members of all committees.) The extreme cases are those of three New York church-extension secretaries, each of whom belongs to seven committees of the New York Federation. This is unparalleled; but the total showing is that of a considerable degree of integration between comity and other federation interests. In brief, there is strong inclination to use important members over and over again, especially church-extension executives.

COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE

The sixteen comity committees studied held a total of seventy meetings during the year preceding the study. The number of meetings varied from none in two cases to eleven in one case. The majority of committees met irregularly, a typical explanation being, "We're not called unless we have something to do." The average number of meetings per year was 4.3, with four or five per year as the most frequent numbers. From five to seven members were present in the most characteristic cases.

The aggregate attendance at the seventy meetings was 638, or only 38 per cent. of what it would have been if every

member had been present at every meeting. The actual range relative to possible attendance was very great; namely, from 26 per cent. in the case of St. Louis to 65 per cent. in the case of New York. The median attendance, 43 per cent. of the possible attendance, was somewhat higher than the arithmetic average.

Attendance was strongly influenced by the size of the committees. All but one committee (Philadelphia), which had less than a median rate of attendance, was above average in size; while only one (New York) above average in size showed a more than median rate of attendance.

Speaking approximately, one-third of the total body of members accounted for two-thirds of all attendance during the year, while 30 per cent. of the members never attended at all. Consequently in committees meeting infrequently, a small minority sometimes was responsible for the entire business of the year. In a less extreme case (Rochester), five persons out of fourteen did 83 per cent., of the attending. In one of the best cases (Detroit), seven persons out of eighteen, each attending more than half of the time, accounted for 75 per cent. of the attendance. Nowhere was the attendance rate at the same time high and well distributed. General knowledge of committee performance would perhaps not lead one to expect otherwise.

In view of the official responsibilities of extension executives, it was natural to suppose that they would make a better showing, and this they actually did. Their aggregate attendance was 45 per cent. of the possible attendance, in contrast with 38 per cent. in the case of the combined membership. The superior attendance rate of executives occurred, however, in but seven cities out of twelve, where a comparison was pertinent. In the other cities, other members made a better attendance record than did extension executives. There was collateral evidence to indicate that here a group of laymen were holding rather unwilling ecclesiastics in line for the practice of comity. On the other hand, in most cases of very large committees involving proportionate de-

nominational representation both lay and clerical, paid executives were found doing very much more than their share of attending.

The average record of comity committees with respect to attendance and continuity of attention to business is so poor as largely to vitiate the claim that they are representative. And it may be seriously questioned whether adequate integration of thought processes is not rendered virtually impossible without a better grade of performance. The situation goes far toward elucidating the relative failure in a good many comity cases. But it also makes the problem of routine practices all the more important. Every little advantage must be used in every way to overcome so great disadvantage on the major issues.

COMMITTEE ROUTINE

In the study of routine practices, about one-sixth of the seventy meetings of comity committees which occurred during the year in the cities studied were either attended by the surveyors or made the subject of a careful interview in which a check-list covering proceedings in great detail was used. It is not claimed that observation of one meeting out of an average of four or five per year is an adequate sampling, nor that the meetings visited were accurately representative of those held in other federations. Nevertheless, even a loose generalization on the basis of the number of available observations probably serves to set forth the chief characteristics of committee processes, especially since they have been studied in the light of the recorded results from a much larger sample of meetings.

MEETINGS

The majority of committees studied held their meetings at noon in connection with a luncheon. The meeting was generally held in a private room at a restaurant or club,

though occasionally in a similar room served by a cafeteria in a denominational headquarters building of the Y. M. C. A. Meetings not held at noon were generally held at 4 P. M. Some committees met now at the one time and again at the other. The duration of the meeting ranged from one to two and one-quarter hours; an hour and a half being the most frequent period.

The transaction of business was generally begun during the progress of the meal. This custom seemed to put genuine limitations around serious discussion or the examination of data in connection with business presented. The meeting room was not always well lighted; the taking of notes and handling of documents were frequently difficult. Except in a few cases where a board or committee-room in an office building was used, visual means of presenting facts were seriously handicapped. For instance, the Chicago comity committee was found discussing where it could store a large city map in the public restaurant in which the meetings were habitually held. Visual material was always difficult to carry around and harder to display effectively.

It was only the very occasional committee that did not show that it was meeting under the sense of pressure for time. The formula most frequently in evidence was, "Our time is short. Let's get down to business." On the other hand, the sharing of a meal unquestionably introduced a mood of fellowship and opportunity for acquaintance in other spheres than that of business, which would otherwise never have been presented.

PREPARATION OF BUSINESS

In the smaller federations the executive secretary ordinarily acts as recording secretary of all committees. It is his responsibility to feed in the left-over business of previous meetings, to arrange the docket so that committee reports are heard, and to report the outcomes of action to the parties concerned. A few federations depend somewhat

slavishly upon the executive secretary. In the main, however, the fact that comity committees are so largely made up of paid professionals in charge of denominational church extension prevents undue dependence upon the executive; and in the stronger federations where commissions are relatively independent, the committee's own chairman and secretary project the business with only minor reference to the executive secretary.

There is no adequate record of the amount of conferring that goes on between the executives and committee members, or between committee members independently in advance of meetings. But, as in a number of cases, the executive secretaries of the larger denominations constitute a sort of "inside crowd," and a good deal of negotiating back and forth in private is to be assumed. Again, where business is committed to subcommittees more or less extensive conference is necessary.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

With exceptions already noted, the minutes of comity committees are generally kept by the executive secretary of the federation or by an office stenographer. The original data frequently consist of notes made on the margin of a docket sheet, which are later worked up into a formal record. The sense of hurry, and undoubtedly also a desire to reduce work on the part of the recorder, generally keeps the minutes down to a mere skeleton. This practice gets vigorous defense when challenged. The necessary result is that, in the main, only the bare results of committee action are recorded. Discussions showing the various positions taken in connection with the cases are rarely set forth, except in connection with certain formal discussions of policy. Subcommittee reports are largely oral, and even when made in writing rarely cover the course of discussion through which decisions were reached.

Participation in a given meeting is ordinarily limited to a rather small minority of members present, though of course under the subcommittee system a larger number may be rep-

resented in the original proportion of the reports rendered. The observers noted no case of obvious repression of discussion, other than what grew out of the atmosphere of haste and was apparently accepted as habitual.

The fact that business generally originated in specific proposals, or in reports of business which had been referred to a committee, determined in advance that most of the issues that were directly considered had been predigested. They represented what have been called "units of transaction," rather than statements of a full situation. In other words, they had been put into the shape to be voted upon rather than to be thought through. In this connection, again, however, it should be noted that the preponderance of church-extension executives assured that the average committee was largely composed of men quite capable of taking their own parts and maintaining them, and that there was little chance for a chairman or executive secretary to dominate. Where an executive secretary functioned prominently, he almost invariably appeared as a fair, clear, and impartial mediator between the conflicting positions that arose. But his obvious interest was in getting business through rather than in reaching conclusions through vitally integrated thought processes.

In the twelve meetings studied, six involved some consideration of large issues of comity, such as the relation between central and residential churches, the churching of foreign and Negro populations, the recognition of community churches, and the most advantageous size for a city church. In four cases out of the twelve, there were somewhat extensive exhibitions of objective data. In only a single case were representatives to a controversy directly heard. In no case was there any open discussion of emotional attitudes, though these obviously entered into some of the positions taken. In all of the meetings it was evident that what were felt to be claims of courtesy somewhat limited the discussion in most cases, together with a sense of the inherently weak position of the committee. Some part of the discussion was

apt to be cynical; some showed discouragement. Great readiness for delay was evident; and there were not a few cases of "passing the buck."

FOLLOW UP

In rare cases, committee minutes were habitually mimeographed and sent out to all members. Still other committees did this occasionally in the case of special reports. It is to be assumed that secretaries habitually notified those concerned in the negotiations taken. Rarely, however, was there any evidence of educational publicity in the sense of an attempt to lead the thinking of the constituency in the matters with which the committee had been dealing. A minority of federations are likely to notice specific comity action in the issues of the local organ following a meeting; but the presentation is generally sentimental rather than expository. There is almost no attempt to fill the gap between the highly integrated purposes of the committee members and the divisive moods and attitudes of constituencies. This is sometimes fully acknowledged as a weakness. The meetings studied included no case of appeal to publicity in the effort to get backing for the committee in a controverted case.

Summarizing the impressions gained from the study of twelve committee meetings, especially as compared with the frequently elaborate documents attached to the records, one can hardly escape the conclusion that the most vital thinking is done by individuals or subcommittees, and that the committees themselves largely act on the basis of trust in their representatives, or else line up in a merely traditional manner on denominational grounds.

COMMITTEE THINKING ON THEORETICAL ISSUES

The twelve committee meetings studied showed several definite expressions of the continued will to coöperate; but no theoretical consideration of the sanctions of comity. The assumed objectives were in no wise modified as a result of

any of these meetings. On the other hand, the applicability of the comity idea to special groups of churches, such as foreign and Negro, was frequently observed in the process of active evolution. Apparently also the stock of criteria applied and of precedents reached was being moderately added to during these meetings.

The presence and dominance of emotional attitudes was strongly marked, though their results were quite unrecognized either in discussion or in records. For example, secretary A's figures proved that there is room for a church of his denomination in section X of city Y; yet he did not press a proposal; first, because he sensed strong opposition; and second, because he assumed in the support of his case that former members of his denomination who had gone into existing churches were still natural materials for a new church of their former faith. He knows that this assumption is not accepted. The committee, on its part, had no relish for fighting the issue through at this time. Consequently the case resulted in no action and no progress.

Summing up the more obvious conclusions from the study of committee processes, it is not difficult to see where a better average routine would help matters. Since time is an unescapable factor, it seems imperative to save the time of committees, which are the really responsible agents of comity, by the use of more time and expenditure on the part of secretaries and officers in recording and circulating data that come before them. This should include an indication of positions taken in discussions and the attitudes expressed. In no other way can absentees have any chance of keeping continuity of interest. Officers who resent poor attendance do not always escape an unconfessed desire to penalize the absent. "If they don't attend they don't deserve to know what's going on." It goes without saying that this is an indefensible attitude. On the more positive side, a better routine would certainly supply each comity committee with a cumulative record of cases, including a full digest of information and action concerning each from start to

finish. The modern case-records of social agencies afford an excellent example on this point.

The fact that the time of committees is limited seems to point to a second improvement in routine. Committees continuously need to generalize their issues, to be led to wrest the heart out of them, so that the results may reappear in accepted criteria and precedents. This end might be secured by an annual review of what the committee has learned from its own cases during the past year. The bases of all decisions could be analyzed and classified and the stock of rulings added to as they have developed in the course of current business.

This suggestion passes over from the realm of better routine to that of better thinking. In general, while the responsibility for turning out routine business is located with chairman and secretaries, responsibility for leadership in progressive thinking is not even considered. For example, factual data, though frequently presented, appeared in the main not to be effectively organized nor pointedly brought to bear upon comity decisions. Significant improvements could easily be made in the matter of feeding in the results of surveys in connection with discussion and decision.

Finally, a better psychology of comity is greatly to be desired. In starting procedures with proposals to which objection is formally invited, many federations put themselves under the initial handicap of a conflict psychology. Again, in accepting such precedents as that representatives of denominations concerned in a case are not to be allowed to vote on the case, committee members force themselves into the rôle of contestants when they might better be inspired and entrusted to take a large view of common problems. However, considering the feeble origins of comity and the negative tendencies with which so much of its practice is still satisfied, it is perhaps not strange that few committees have come to the point of conceiving comity as a process of integrated thinking, whose success is not ordinarily to be found in an accepted decision as between opposing parties, but rather in a coöperative conclusion to which everybody assents.

Chapter V

PROCEDURES

Just how does comity go about it to reach its objectives? Like practice in any realm in which similar situations are dealt with repeatedly, comity has developed its institutional habits, its set of forms, and regular procedures. But comity has its informal as well as its formal stages. In the informal stage, numerous inquiries are answered relative to church-extension problems, and much information is exchanged in the course of free discussion, without raising any issue causing conflict or requiring adjudication.

As the discussion of committees in the last chapter showed, committee sessions are apt to be held in connection with a luncheon. One hears the usual lot of friendly persiflage and miscellaneous discourse before the committee gets down to work. There are plentiful exchanges of gossip and indirect suggestions of comity matters which sometimes serve as red herrings drawn across the trail of purposeful thought. But even this informal phase of committee association, which does not even take itself seriously, may be highly important in tempering personalities one to the other and in feeling out minds whose real motives are more or less concealed. A committee will occasionally be found whose members periodically report upon all the denominational extension work under their supervision in order that the group may be kept informed.

Again, and apart from any meeting of the committee, many incipient issues are settled out of court, either through the adjustments reached on the initiative of some party to the difference, or on that of the federation secretary. These

adjustments may not be referred to any committee, and their private discussion may call for no definite action. Psychologically speaking, however, the fact that the committee, both in its meetings and in the intercourse of its members, offers a forum for the exchange of views and the feeling out of one party by another, may go far to prevent the offering of proposals that would clash. Thus thirty out of fifty-five comity items listed in the records of the Greater New York Federation never came to the point at which they figured as cases falling under definite procedures. Yet discussion in the comity committee contributed to the solution of many of the problems involved. In another federation, the entire history of comity transactions stretching over more than a decade showed only a minority of cases representing clear-cut issues between two or more parties.

Under such circumstances, then, and by the use of such informal means, the collective wisdom of the coöperating group is often brought to bear and results are secured without invoking or requiring definite procedures. It seems likely that short-circuiting is sometimes attempted prematurely, sometimes, indeed craftily; that secretaries who like to manage sometimes try their hand at adjustments that would better be brought into open discussion. Partly for this reason, highly significant problems sometimes fail to get beyond the nebulous stage. On the other hand, it seems clear that when really successful adjustments are made without the resort to elaborate processes both time and energy have been conserved.

Formal Procedures

Even the formal stages of procedure, concerned with reports, discussion, and decisions, tend to get set aside rather lightly. It is difficult to tell when the consideration of a case starts, exactly who sponsored it, or who has standing with relation to it. Short-circuiting of processes is the rule rather than the exception. Cases disappear from con-

sideration at all stages. From the records one cannot tell either the beginning or the end.

This study has, nevertheless, been able to trace the general course of 417 cases and to characterize their procedures roughly. The most general characteristics of the group of cases as a whole are two:

(1) They are usually introduced as possible issues between denominations, although not as generally involving sharp conflicts between individual churches. In only a few federations are they originally presented as situations requiring joint investigation.

(2) Easy cases get easy-going treatment; the full course of formal procedure is reserved for more hardly fought issues.

The more important results of the study of cases were as follows:

In spite of the tendency to informality, 70 per cent. of the cases involving little or no conflict got at least reported back to the comity committee after some form of investigation. In all but 18 per cent. of these the proposal was approved, though quite often conditions were attached. Many cases were not competitive and the outcome would probably have been satisfactory even without comity processes. Friendly consultation was all that was required. To make systematic opportunity for such a consultation is undoubtedly a spiritual gain; but it has to be conceded that the chief area of comity success has been that of cases presenting no serious problem. And even in cases of mild conflict, committee decisions reflect a good many concessions to hardness of heart on the part of participants.

Forty-five cases of serious conflict were carefully investigated. These generally concerned specific issues between churches, though occasionally the issue was between a church and a comity committee as an interpreter on behalf of coöperating denominations of what is wise from the collective standpoint. A few cases of serious conflict were between insiders and outsiders.

Faced by acute conflict, committees were found to "lie

down" with disconcerting frequency. When unable to sidestep a case they frequently saved their faces by a compromise decision not representing their actual judgment. When forced to stand and render an adverse decision, they generally found the decision flaunted by the party decided against.

Nevertheless, with insiders, comity proved about a 50 per cent. technical success, even in cases of serious conflict. With respect to outsiders, it was almost a total failure, though no more could reasonably have been expected.

CASES

Only a few cities have promulgated statements of their comity procedure so precise that one can look to them with any confidence for knowledge of the manner in which situations are actually met. For this reason, the following study of procedures is primarily derived from the examination of 417 cases occurring in sixteen cities. In connection with this examination the more significant agreements or disagreements between announced theory and habitual practice are pointed out.

The sources of information were the records of the respective comity committees supplemented by interviews with secretaries and committeemen.[1]

The period during which the cases were under consideration varied from city to city, but all fell within such dates as to make them representative of contemporary comity practice.

The 417 cases were limited to those that received formal consideration by their respective federations. Whether or not such consideration had been given had to be determined from the records. This resulted in the necessary omission of a good many listed cases, because, in the first place, as has

[1]The 417 cases were distributed as follows: Baltimore, 51; Chicago, 50; Detroit, 67; Indianapolis, 4; Minneapolis, 21; New York, 25; Oakland, 19; Philadelphia, 52; Pittsburgh, 4; Rochester, 26; Toledo, 13; Wichita, 2; San Francisco, 16; St. Louis, 47; Washington, 6; Youngstown, 14.

already been indicated, there is a vast field of comity practice that does not take the form of the formal adjudication of specific situations.

ORIGINS OF CASES

Again, declarations of comity theory are not precise as to what constitutes the formal initiation of the case. Of the occasional definite statement, the following is typical: "Plans should be set forth in writing outlining as fully as possible the nature of the work contemplated." Where such definiteness was prescribed, only those cases were considered that were initiated according to the requirements. In other cities only cases that had been actually accorded formal treatment through a series of stages were considered.

It was found that a large proportion of comity cases did not originate in positive proposals from a specified source. Very often, instead, they originated in protest. Some denomination had gone ahead with a project which it did not regard as subject to comity practice. Its steps were challenged by the bringing of an objection to the comity committee. Protests accordingly furnish the second method by which comity cases are formally initiated.

All told, a good many cases had to be omitted from consideration because they were not initiated with due formality, either as proposals or as protest, or else because the record was insufficient.

The 417 cases accordingly represent not the whole number of cases treated by the federations concerned, but merely such cases as were both formally initiated and adequately recorded.

DISPOSITION OF CASES: WITHDRAWN OR NOT CONSIDERED

After having been formally initiated, 2 per cent. of these cases were not formally considered because their proponents withdrew them. Among the reasons for such withdrawals were the proponent's discovery that he was not able to carry

out his proposal, or that there was so much opposition that it was impolitic to press it.

An additional 15 per cent. of the cases, though formally initiated, were not considered by the committee. Two-thirds of these were cases originating in wholesale surveys which the federation concerned had not had sufficient time or resources to deal with up to the time of the study. These cases were technically still pending, though there was reason to believe that a good many of them would never be pressed. In the remaining third of the cases that had not been considered, the primary cause was lack of jurisdiction.

Comity statements rarely settle questions of jurisdiction; and comity as practiced is distinctly broader than any body of conscious theory. Jurisdiction is consequently determined by rather feeble precedents. Committees, in the main, make their rulings as they go along, or else act in confessed uncertainty.

The chief grounds for denying jurisdiction in twenty-two cases studied were:

(1) Because the matter was judged to fall outside the scope of comity. Thus jurisdiction was frequently denied in the matter of controversies within a single denomination.

(2) Because the matter was not presented at the right time, as when an objector who had had previous opportunity to make an objection brought in his protest too late.

(3) In the third place, it sometimes happened that one of the parties was judged not eligible to participate in comity, either because it was not the proper sort of institution, or because it did not appear through the proper representatives. An example of the former issue appeared in a request from the Volunteers of America for the approval of a location for their meeting room. The comity committee replied in effect: "We will consider this case because it is a sensible thing to do so, and because it involves the welfare of the community. But we do not think that we ought to consider it, because comity can exist only between churches, and the Volunteers are not a church." An issue involving an improper

agent was presented when the pastor of a denominational church brought in an independent proposal ignoring the official representative of his denomination on the comity committee. This case was thrown out of court. In general, then, comity proposals, in order to get consideration, must satisfactorily answer the questions, what, when, and who? This they failed to do in 22 out of 417 formally presented cases.

FORMAL CONSIDERATION OF CASES

Cases withdrawn or not considered having been subtracted, 83 per cent. of the 417 cases, or 345 in all, remained for formal consideration. The study sought to discover how many of these cases were undertaken under somewhat similar theories of comity. As already shown,[2] some cities accept a more positive, and others a more negative, version of comity theory; while still others hold an intermediate position. The study consequently distributed the 345 cases according to the type of comity theory under which each was considered, with results as follows:

Type of Comity Theory	*Number of Cases Considered*
Negative	59
Mediating	126
Positive	160

DECISIONS WITHOUT FORMAL CONFERENCE OR INVESTIGATION: INFLUENCE OF DIVERGENT THEORIES

One hundred and thirteen cases, or 33 per cent. of those formally considered, were approved or disapproved without further procedures. For some reason the comity committees dealing with these cases felt warranted in omitting the stages of investigation and conference. Three-quarters of the time, however, approval was delayed for one or two months. Only three out of these 113 cases thus disposed of were disapproved.

[2] P. 40.

But at this point very striking differences appeared among cases considered under the different theories.

Under a negative version of comity, relatively more cases were decided without conference or investigation procedures than under other versions.

Pittsburgh, for example, represents on the whole a negative conception of comity. Its statement of procedures follows:

> "Upon receipt of such notice [of the location or relocation of a church] it shall be the duty of the Council of Churches, at once, to notify all other denominations affiliated with the Council of the proposed relocation or new work. In case of protest or objection by any affiliated denomination, within sixty days from issuance of the notice, the question shall be submitted to the Commission on Comity for investigation and adjustment.
>
> "The findings of the Commission on Comity, shall be reported to the Council, made a matter of record and officially reported to all affiliated denominations."

It is to be noted that no subsequent procedure is specified unless the proposal is opposed. Consequently it is easy to dispose of uncontroverted cases. More than half of the fifty-nine cases considered under comity theories of this type were actually approved without further reference.

A fair example of procedures going with the mediating type of theory is afforded by Indianapolis. In this city, provision is made for cases of conflict, but opportunity is also afforded for the comity committee, in its discretion, to investigate the merits of the case whether or not there is conflict. This is shown in the following quotation:

> "It is expected that in all cases [of location or relocation of churches] notice shall be given in writing to the Comity Committee, whose duty it shall be upon reception of such notice (1) to notify all pastors of co-operating churches within the neighborhood, (2) to notify the various denominational executives so that

opportunity may be given to file protests or counter claims, if desired; and, when necessary, (3) to appoint a committee to consider all the factors involved in the situation, and to make such survey as may be necessary. After making as careful and complete an investigation as possible, this special committee shall submit its report in writing to the Comity Committee, approving or disapproving the proposal."

Only 45 per cent. of cases considered under this and similar theories of comity were decided without further reference.

The Chicago Church Federation represents the positive version of comity theory. It omits all reference to conflict as determining its procedures. Neither notification of, nor conference with, the contending parties is required; and it is specifically indicated that the investigation of a proposal shall be made "from the standpoint of the local field in relation to which" the proposal is made. The articles covering this point are as follows:

> "It shall be the duty of the Fields Committee to receive applications for location of new work, for relocation of established churches or change of program of service, and after careful investigation to make recommendation with reference to the same to the Comity Commission.
>
> "On the basis of its investigation and in the light of the principles governing the location of churches and similar institutions hereinafter stated, it shall present its recommendation to the Comity Commission.
>
> "The Committee shall keep a complete record of all applications and its findings with reference to the same. It shall make a written report of its proceedings at each meeting of the Commission."

Under such a procedure, if the comity committee hears the contestants it does so as granting them a privilege rather than as according them a right. The comity committee

acts primarily, not as a court, but as an executive group reaching its decisions through such means of information as it desires to secure. The parties at issue almost never appear jointly at a formal hearing, and chief dependence is put upon objective factors and consideration of general good in arriving at coöperative decisions.

Less than one-fourth of the cases considered under theories of this type were decided without reference to further procedures.

Even more striking was the correspondence between theories of comity and the finality of committee decisions. Considerably more than half of the decisions made under negative theories of comity were conditional; apparently because no investigation had preceded them. The committee did not feel that it had enough evidence to warrant an unconditional verdict. On the other hand, in no case was a condition attached even to immediate decisions under mediating or positive conditions of comity. Cases, apparently, were not given immediate decision unless the grounds were exceedingly clear.

The following summary of the evidence shows a steady decline in the proportion of cases approved without reference from the more negative to the more positive theories of comity:

Type of Comity Theory	*Per. Cent of Cases Approved Without Reference*
Total Cases	33
Negative	51
Mediating	45
Positive	24

Apparently, then, the stronger and more comprehensive the idea of comity the more completely and faithfully is it carried out through formal procedures.

One hundred and thirteen of the 345 formally considered cases having been decided without reference, 232 were left to be subjected to further procedures.

For the purpose of study, these cases were subdivided into

two groups: (1) 187 cases in which the element of conflict was absent or slight; (2) 45 cases in which conflict was acute. These two groups are now to be separately considered.

PROCEDURES IN CASES OF MILD CONFLICT

As at every stage of comity procedures, withdrawals of cases occurred after they had been reported for specific action. Fifteen cases were thus removed from consideration. While the course of these cases was often incompletely reported, the records were sufficiently clear to show the general reasons for their withdrawals. Ten of them occurred after a factual investigation had proved to the proponent that it was not to his advantage to press the case. In a few additional cases an objector withdrew his protest after a fuller consideration of the facts. Withdrawals also sometimes occurred because the proponent felt that there was too much opposition to be overcome.

Occasionally, too, a proposal had been introduced with explicit conditions attached to it; and was withdrawn because the conditions were not fulfilled. In a Toledo case, for example, Congregational representatives asked for an allocation of a field "if a survey justifies." A survey was made showing that this denomination was greatly in the minority in the community and that there were too few people to warrant a church anyhow. The case ended at this point by virtue of the terms under which it had been introduced.

In the Chicago Church Federation it has come to be a general usage to initiate a case by asking, not for the allocation of a field, but for a survey. This seems to explain the large number of proposals withdrawn in Chicago. The facts often settle the case without a controversy.

Deducting the 15 cases withdrawn, 172 were left, which continued before the comity committee for such additional procedures as it might follow. The records were inadequate to show for exactly what purpose reference to further pro-

cedures was made. In a distinct majority of cases of mild conflict such reference was declared to be for the purpose of investigation; in a minority, the purpose was declared to be that of conference with the interested parties in an attempt to reconcile differences. The sequel showed that reference, in many cases, involved both types of action; but the records failed to tell in what proportion of cases committees seriously undertook to secure additional objective data or to make such data the basis of their decisions.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

When objective information was sought, the actual investigation was most frequently put into the hands of a special subcommittee, only occasionally with the assistance of a survey secretary or other expert. In a strong minority of cases, however, the investigation was entrusted to the denomination desiring to enter the field, or to that denomination in conjunction with any other denominations that felt interested in it. The methods used varied greatly. The investigation was generally termed a survey. Its technique was sometimes as sketchy as the chance observations of three or four men who drive over a suburban area and never get out of their automobile. At other times it was as elaborate and competent as a regional survey made by a university research department and covering the entire economic and social basis of a city's life as a ground for planning its religious institutions. The extent of the investigation was frequently determined by the general familiarty of the members of the committee with the communities concerned; such familiarity being held sufficient to cover a large proportion of points that might logically be supposed to require objective consideration.

The more formal investigations of subcommittees involved a more or less complete house-to-house canvass of the vicinity of the proposed church, to find out the number of families and individuals of suitable age for participation in a

church organization; how many of them were Protestant, Catholic, or of other religion, and how many had no church connection. The number of Protestants of each denomination was also ascertained. Sometimes, but not always, each family was asked to say whether or not it would favor or participate in the organization of a neighborhood church and what denomination it would prefer.

CONCLUSIONS AS TO ROUTINE SURVEYS

In seeking to estimate the real significance of surveys as affecting the individual decisions of comity committees, one has to note, on the one hand, that surveys are generally optional, and hence by no means invariable in actual practice. But, on the other hand, a good many federations were found that had made more or less recent general surveys covering the churches and community involved in the practice of comity, or were engaged in continuous surveys in connection with the routine work of some department. In such instances the federations might feel with some justification that much of the pertinent data bearing upon any specific case were already at hand. A profounder problem concerns the weight which federations give to objective information even when it is secured. The total evidence remains somewhat vague, but one is left with the impression that even those that ordinarily secure such data sometimes contrive to get along with a minimum amount, and do not depend upon that minimum any too loyally. A great gulf seems to be fixed between even the most complete survey and a set of practical decisions utilizing the facts that have been revealed. One obvious reason for this is that objective considerations alone cannot settle problems in an actual world. Judgments based upon fact are enmeshed with influences arising in personalities and their feelings, and are subject to all sorts of pressures at the hands of practical interests. All the more, then, should objective considerations be permitted to state their valid conclusions clearly and completely before the

matter is passed over, as it must be, into the realm of practical compromise.

REPORTING CASES BACK AFTER REFERENCE

In point of fact, a very considerable proportion of cases referred for further consideration after investigation and report are never heard of again. It is easy to see that a theory of comity which intends merely to adjust conflicts might naturally be willing to drop a case whenever such adjustment is actually reached, without the formality of reporting back and clearing the record. And even a federation whose theory demands that it determine the wisdom of any proposal (irrespective of whether the proposal was contested or not), might on occasion be very glad to avoid the responsibility of decisive action.

Apparently this is just what happens. The proportion of cases in which the results of reference were reported back varies with the different theories of comity held by the federations. The results of a comparison on this point are as follows:

Theory of Comity	*Per Cent. of Cases Reported Back After Reference*
Total Cases	70
Negative	79
Mediating	52
Positive	72

The comparison fails to show any wholly consistent tendency; but the following is offered as a hypothetical explanation of the differences found. Because federations holding a negative theory of comity send so few cases through to the point of reference, they might be expected to deal the more faithfully with the few that reach that point. They have virtually selected only such cases as require thoroughgoing treatment. This hypothesis, if true, would explain why this group shows the highest proportion of cases reported back after reference.

It might in turn be argued that federations holding a mediating theory of comity (although they do not drop so many cases in their early stage as federations holding a negative theory) would be less likely to carry procedures to the bitter end than those holding a positive theory. In point of fact, only a trifle more than half of their cases are ever reported back. In other words, the stage at which the mediating theory of comity tends to let go of the case would seem to come after the case has been referred to a subcommittee. The committee may or may not affect an adjustment; at least it neglects to report back.

As already shown, federations holding the most positive theories of comity approve relatively few cases without reference. The present comparison shows also that they do not incline to let go of cases after reference. In 72 per cent. of them the procedure is carried at least to the point of a report of the subcommittee, with recommendations.

What the total evidence shows most emphatically is that under no theory of comity do federations show fixed determination to carry procedures through to any defined end when their objects may have been earlier accomplished.[3]

APPROVAL AND DISAPPROVAL

Of the 121 cases in which conflict was absent or not acute, and which were reported back after reference, 103 were approved; and 18, or 16 per cent., were disapproved. But approval was qualified in 16 of the 103 cases by such requirements as that the action authorized be delayed till some specified date, or that a different site than the one first proposed for a church be selected.

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[3]The statistical exactness of the conclusion just expressed is somewhat affected by uncertainty as to the number of unsettled cases that were actually still alive at the time of the study and concerning which active consideration may have been revived later. The data make it probable that about fifteen cases fall in this class and that they are about equally divided between the mediating and the positive types of comity theory. If half of them should finally get reported back, it would increase the percentage of cases reported back under these two theories by 4 or 5 per cent. each.

The records do not adequately show what happens after the decisions of comity committees are rendered. It is naturally desired to accept favorable decisions. In occasional cases, however, a church or denomination receiving such a decision has later had to report back that it was unable to carry out what it had proposed. Action was then sometimes taken revoking the approval, and the field thus opened for re-assignment.

Very frequently the point of difficulty is a time-limit attached to favorable action. Cases often have to be reconsidered with reference to an extension of time; or perhaps reviewed because of changed conditions created by the lapse of time. Such situations are very frequent. Rulings covering them are discussed on page 136.

It is not clear from the records how many of the eighteen unfavorable verdicts were accepted by those whose plans were thus declared contrary to the united judgment. The fact that, so far as the records go, none of these cases was bitterly fought makes it probable that the unfavorable decision was generally accepted. As already shown, proponents not infrequently withdraw their own proposals. A proponent who does not go to this extreme may nevertheless be so shaken in his own faith that he is glad to accept the verdict of others. For example, the projector of a new skyscraper church that would have come into competition with several old ones, was "half persuaded" that his plan would go on the rocks financially, and withdrew it without much objection.

On the other hand, even in mild conflict cases, committees do not always decide according to the weight of the argument. The records very definitely suggest that judgments are sometimes rendered in an effort to keep peace. But there is no real evidence as to the relative frequency of such decisions.

Generalizing the study of procedures, one comes at least to this conclusion: that comity, as actually practiced, presumes no obligation to consider a case through to an actual outcome and that no general habit has been established of

recording procedure fully, or of closing up each case-record technically. Thus a federation's by-laws may require a hearing of both parties to a comity case by the committee; but its secretary may write, "practically all cases are settled without a hearing."

The study started with 345 cases considered by comity commissions. The cases dropped out all along the line of procedure; so that only 232 were subjected to formal treatment, of which number 187 were cases of mild conflict. Regardless of what procedures had gone before, in only 121 of these cases were decisions reported back. Of these, 18 were unfavorable to the proponent. The records do not tell what happened next in the majority of these cases.

Chapter VI

PROCEDURES (Continued)

COMITY CASES INVOLVING ACUTE CONFLICT

In addition to the 187 cases involving only mild conflict, 45 remain for consideration in which the records clearly showed evidence of more than formal protest. In all these cases there was rather stubborn insistence by each party upon his own position. The cases are undoubtedly fairly illustrative with respect to the range and variety of hotly contested comity situations that characterize federation experience; but they are not offered as a complete list. One does not know from them how frequent acute conflict is relative to mild conflict; because, where records were not clear, cases were omitted from the account.

Entire phases of conflict were also omitted; for example, fairly numerous cases of pronounced conflict within single denominations. Those cases were also omitted in which feelings became so bitter that one side or both sides declined to submit to further procedures. In brief, the investigation at this point takes into account only such conflicts as permitted themselves to be restrained within the forms of comity practice.[1]

In the following tabulation the number of proposing denominations adds to forty-six, instead of forty-five, because in one instance two denominations were joint proponents of a single proposition. In many cases, at least two denominations were equally concerned in opposing proposals; and in an ap-

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[1]The distribution of conflict cases by cities was: Baltimore, 10; Chicago, 7; Detroit, 2; Indianapolis, 3; Minneapolis, 3; New York, 2; Oakland, 3; Philadelphia, 1; Pittsburgh, 1; Rochester, 2; St. Louis, 3; Toledo, 2; Wichita, 2; Youngstown, 4.

preciable number of instances the entire group of denominations of a community united in opposition.

The denominations concerned in the forty-five cases and their relations to one another were:

No. of Cases	*Denominations Submitting Proposals*	*Denomination or Agency Opposing*	*(No. of Cases)*
1	African Methodist Episcopal	Comity Commission	(1)
7	Baptist	Disciples	(1)
		Evangelical	(1)
		Presbyterian	(4)
		All Other Denominations of Neighborhood	(2)
2	Disciples	Congregational	(1)
		Lutheran	(2)
2	Evangelical	Methodist Episcopal	(2)
		Methodist Protestant	(1)
2	Lutheran	Congregational	(1)
		Methodist Protestant	(1)
8	Methodist Episcopal	Comity Commission	(1)
		Congregational	(1)
		Evangelical	(1)
		Presbyterian	(2)
		Reformed	(1)
		All Other Denominations of Neighborhood	(2)
2	Methodist Episcopal South	Methodist Episcopal	(1)
		Methodist Protestant	(1)
		All Other Denominations of Neighborhood	(1)
2	Methodist Protestant	Methodist Episcopal	(1)
		Presbyterian	(1)
1	Methodist Episcopal (German)	Presbyterian	(1)
1	Nazarene	Congregational	(1)
8	Presbyterian	Baptist	(2)
		Comity Committee	(2)
		Congregational	(1)
		Methodist Episcopal	(3)
1	Protestant Episcopal	Methodist Episcopal	(1)
2	Reformed	Methodist Protestant	(2)
2	United Brethren	Lutheran	(1)
		Methodist Episcopal	(2)
		Presbyterian	(1)
4	United Presbyterian	Disciples	(1)
		Lutheran	(1)
		Methodist Episcopal	(1)
		Presbyterian	(1)

In thirty-three of the forty-five cases of conflict, the issue was between "insiders"; that is to say, between denominations habitually coöperating in their respective federations;

and there was no complication involving the independent action of the smaller units of these bodies, or the prestige of the comity committee itself. These thirty-three relatively simple cases are first to be considered.

Eight of them were not referred to in further comity procedures. Five of these eight died without any further formal action. In two cases this occurred after the committee's formal offer of mediation had been turned down, and in two more after conference in which the aggressor denomination showed that it would not submit to comity procedures. These cases illustrate conditions under which further efforts were judged not to have any real chance of success.

Three more cases died in committee. The issues involved in these cases may be summarized as follows:

(1) One church claims that it received verbal approval from the comity committee to locate an enterprise; another church denies the validity of such informal action. (Evidently here the root of the trouble is loose procedure on the part of the committee itself.)

(2) A denomination that has long maintained a neighborhood Sunday school wants to abandon a church located further down-town, to consolidate the two enterprises, and to erect a new church in the immediate vicinity of the Sunday-school site. It claims that, since neither of the enterprises is new, and since it is intending to locate very near to one of the present sites, no equities of other churches are invaded. The other churches in the neighborhood argue that the proposal definitely involves their interests. (The comity committee concerned had not foreseen exactly this contingency, which it could have provided for by a ruling in advance.)

(3) A denomination begins to hold Sunday-evening services in a near-by theater and claims that, since it is not initiating a new church, comity is not involved. Neighboring churches object on the ground that so radical a change in policy makes a practical difference and constitutes competition with their evening services. (Here again is a situation

unmet by comity precedents. It is when confronted by such issues that committees very often "lie down.")

DECISIONS IN CASES OF ACUTE CONFLICT

In the twenty-five remaining cases, procedures were carried out to a point where a decision was reached by the comity committee. Generally this took place after reference to a special committee for investigation and recommendation. So far as the record is clear, the assumed point of the investigation was almost always to discover objective facts pointing to a solution. Only very occasionally is the formula used that the committee is to investigate "all aspects of the situation." Still more rarely is it said explicitly that the passions and prejudices of the contending parties are to be weighed. Yet these are clearly the factors mainly involved when issues reach the conflict stage. In only two cases was anything like a formal arbitration hearing conducted at which both sides appeared simultaneously and presented their cases. This is to say that the effort to deal with cases through anything like strict legal procedures is very rare. Comity declarations, without exception, are significantly silent at this point.

The decisions in the twenty-five cases classify as follows: For the proponent, twelve; against the proponent, nine; compromise, four. Of the favorable decisions, only five were free in the sense that the committee was announcing conclusions based upon objective considerations. Seven decisions were forced in the sense that the committee felt compelled to render a verdict which it did not desire to render on account of the state of the contestant's feelings.

The free decisions were reached in two ways: first by finding a satisfactory ruling on a point not covered by constitution or by precedents; and, second, by attaching conditions acceptable to both parties. Thus, it was ruled that the removal of a church from one site to another within the same neighborhood did not require comity action. The same

ruling was made in a second case, even when a church of the same denomination from another neighborhood was consolidated with the first church in connection with the removal. These rulings may not have pleased the protestants, but they were acquiesced in. Illustrations of conditions successfully attached to favorable decisions include the following:

(1) A denomination desires to locate a church in a suburban community where the existing churches are conventional and poorly equipped, on the plea that these churches do not adequately serve the type of population that is now moving into the suburbs. The comity committee decides that it must wait for a year to see whether the existing churches will not modernize their plants and expand their programs. At the end of this time, a re-survey is made, which proves that they have failed to do so. The committee therefore authorizes the proposing denomination to proceed with another church.

(2) A split occurs in the congregation of one denomination. The seceding body desires to attach itself to another denomination, which asks a location for the new church thus originating. The first denomination opposes. The comity commission decides that the division of the church is an accomplished fact and that the people concerned have the right of self-determination and a choice of denominational allegiance. It therefore approves a location for the seceding church, but specifies that it shall be as far as possible from the site of the former church, but within the same community. In this case the decision is freely made, although the commission obviously regrets the circumstances out of which the necessity arises.

The seven forced decisions related to such situations as the following:

(1) A church has gone ahead and purchased a lot before asking approval of a location. The committee acquiesces after the fact, although convinced that the church is not entitled to this location.

(2) In other cases, an undesirable location is approved on the plea that "this is the only lot available." (The sequel

shows that this allegation is not always true. Protesting churches have also sometimes been known to make the competitor's proposed lot unavailable as the result of a visit to the real estate office!)

(3) A denomination voluntarily surrenders a location that has been granted it; then changes its mind and claims the location, which in the meantime has been allotted to another denomination. The comity committee feels obliged to give the first denomination another site in the same general territory, although two churches are not needed.

(4) A church ceases to hold services in its building for more than a year, and the territory appears to be adequately served by the remaining churches which claim that the field has been abandoned to them. When the original church seeks to re-open work, the committee feels obliged to rule (contary to its conviction) that, as long as the organization was intact and the property held, the field was not really abandoned.

In nine cases where the decision of the committee was against the proposal, the result was accepted by the proponent. The grounds of the decisions in these cases were:

(1) That the proponent had not occupied a location that had been granted him within a specified or reasonable time.

(2) That a new suburban "addition" which uses an old civic center is not really a new community; and, consequently that a location in such an addition is an invasion of the field of existing community churches.

(3) That the results of a survey definitely show that an additional church is not needed.

Decisions that were not accepted included:

(1) Two cases of conflict between churches of different branches of the same denominational family in both of which the invasion of the field of one by the other was particularly deliberate.

(2) A considerable number in which the issue was whether the time had come for an additional church in a rapidly growing suburb. In these cases the party decided against

invariably chose to follow its own judgment, rather than that of the committee. In all, two-thirds of the nine unfavorable decisions were accepted and one-third rejected by the party decided against.

Four additional cases were compromised. In two of these the decision was relatively free, while in the other two it was virtually forced or dubious. Two of these compromise decisions failed to be accepted. Both of them asked churches of different denominations to unite. In the other two, the compromise had to do with delay. A church was granted a location contrary to the committee's actual judgment, provided it would not push its enterprise until after the opposing church had completed the financing of its building. The dubious case allowed the church to enter a protested neighborhood provided it would not itself object if later on a denomination occupied a lot which it already owned in that neighborhood.

Summarizing success and failure, the following results appear:

Successes: Five cases of favorable decisions freely arrived at; six cases of unfavorable decisions accepted, and two successful working compromises.

Failures: Five favorable decisions forced against the judgment of the committee; three unfavorable decisions rejected by parties concerned; and one unsuccessful compromise. One doubtful case still pending completes the twenty-five cases involved.

Since all comity rests merely upon a voluntary basis, this slightly more than 50 per cent. of success in cases in which the issue was vigorously contested constitutes perhaps a not unfavorable showing.

ISSUES APPEARING IN CASES OF ACUTE CONFLICT

The issues involved in these cases are so entangled that it is futile to attempt to tell in how many cases a given issue is present. Obviously, however, some of them are so frequent and

important as to merit primary classification, while others are secondary. Of the primary issues, the larger number relate to some theory of the proper churching of cities held by the parties to comity. They raise the question of the adequacy and completeness of these theories. The most frequent single general issue may formulate itself as follows: At what stage does city growth, especially that of suburban districts, warrant the establishment of additional churches? Less frequently it appears that there are issues of quality as well as of quantity. The controverted point is whether a different kind of ministry is required as well as, or instead of, a larger number of institutions. Other issues relate to the understanding of city structure; for example, whether or not a community is to be defined by its relation to some civic center, or whether an "addition" is a new community irrespective of the question of the center. Still other controversies assume a certain definition of the urban "community" and hinge upon the question of whether relocation within the same "community" involves the rights of other churches. Complicating issues arise when relocation is accompanied by change of policy or the consolidation of a church from outside of the community with an existing one on or near an old location.

Still another group of issues has to do with the question of what shall be done with churches forced to move by uncontrollable social change. Have they any historic rights as against the mere determination of present denominational equities and the theoretically adequate distribution of present religious forces?

A different type of primary issue requires a strengthening or revision of ethical judgments. Comity relations are covered by uncertain sanctions and the sense of obligation to observe them is incompletely established. What moral quality is therefore to be ascribed to a breach of comity usage? How far is a Protestant body ordinarily participating in federation movements at liberty to play somewhat fast and loose with the theory of comity as determined either by declaration or usage?

Secondary issues, which apparently might be settled by established precedents or rulings, include the following: What degree of formality should be required in comity procedures, such as notices and decisions communicated in writing with required timeliness and regularity? What is a reasonable time within which a field must be occupied in order that an allocation may be held? When is a field to be regarded as abandoned, etc.?

The criteria and rulings brought to bear in meeting these issues are considered in the next chapter.

EXCEPTIONALLY COMPLICATED CASES

Of the original 417 comity cases, the twelve special ones still remain for consideration. They were all knotty cases, in which comity obviously had a very poor chance to succeed because of complicating factors. Four of these cases involved outsiders; that is to say, denominations that did not habitually coöperate in the ordinary activities of their respective federations, while in two additional cases the status of one party was dubious.

In the clear cases, the outsider always figured as the aggressor in the controversy. Once the outsider was sustained against an insider's protest in what was really a forced decision. Once the decision was against the outsider (in which case he ignored the decision), and once the case was compromised, the outsider's proposal being sustained after a specified delay. In the fourth case the protest against the outsider was offered but not pressed when, after an informal approach, it was determined that he would not submit himself to comity procedures.

In this type of cases comity thus scores an overwhelming failure.

In five other cases of the twelve, the conflict was essentially one between denominations and the comity committee itself. In two of these cases denominations had gone ahead with new churches, irrespective of their comity obligations.

No church had protested, but the prestige of the comity committee was obviously injured. The committee called the denominations to account; an acute crisis resulted. It was pointed out that all denominations had occasionally forgotten

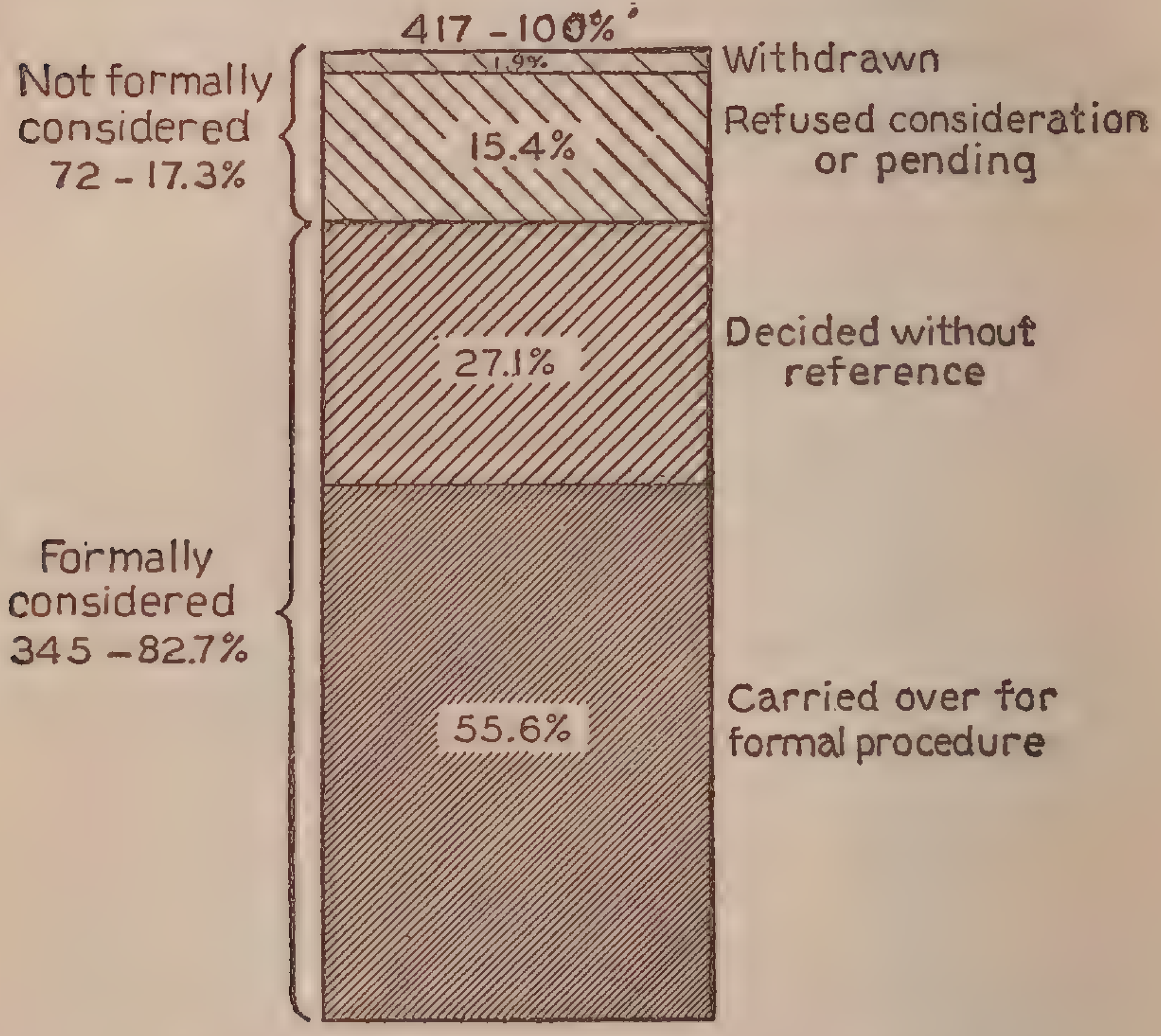


CHART VI—COURSES FOLLOWED IN COMITY CASES DURING EARLIER STAGES OF PROCEDURE.

their obligations. They all proceeded to repent together and agreed to do better in the future.

In the third case, the issue was one of the jurisdiction of the comity committee. A denominational agency having charge of suburban territory started a church in an area where the comity committee had prevously allocated territory to another, and disputed the right of the federation to make decisions concerning this territory. Although the agency of the denomination having jurisdiction in the city was an

established partner in comity usage, the federation could do nothing in this case but protest that the state council of churches had asked it to assume jurisdiction over the immediate suburbs.

The fourth case was one of a Negro church, which insisted

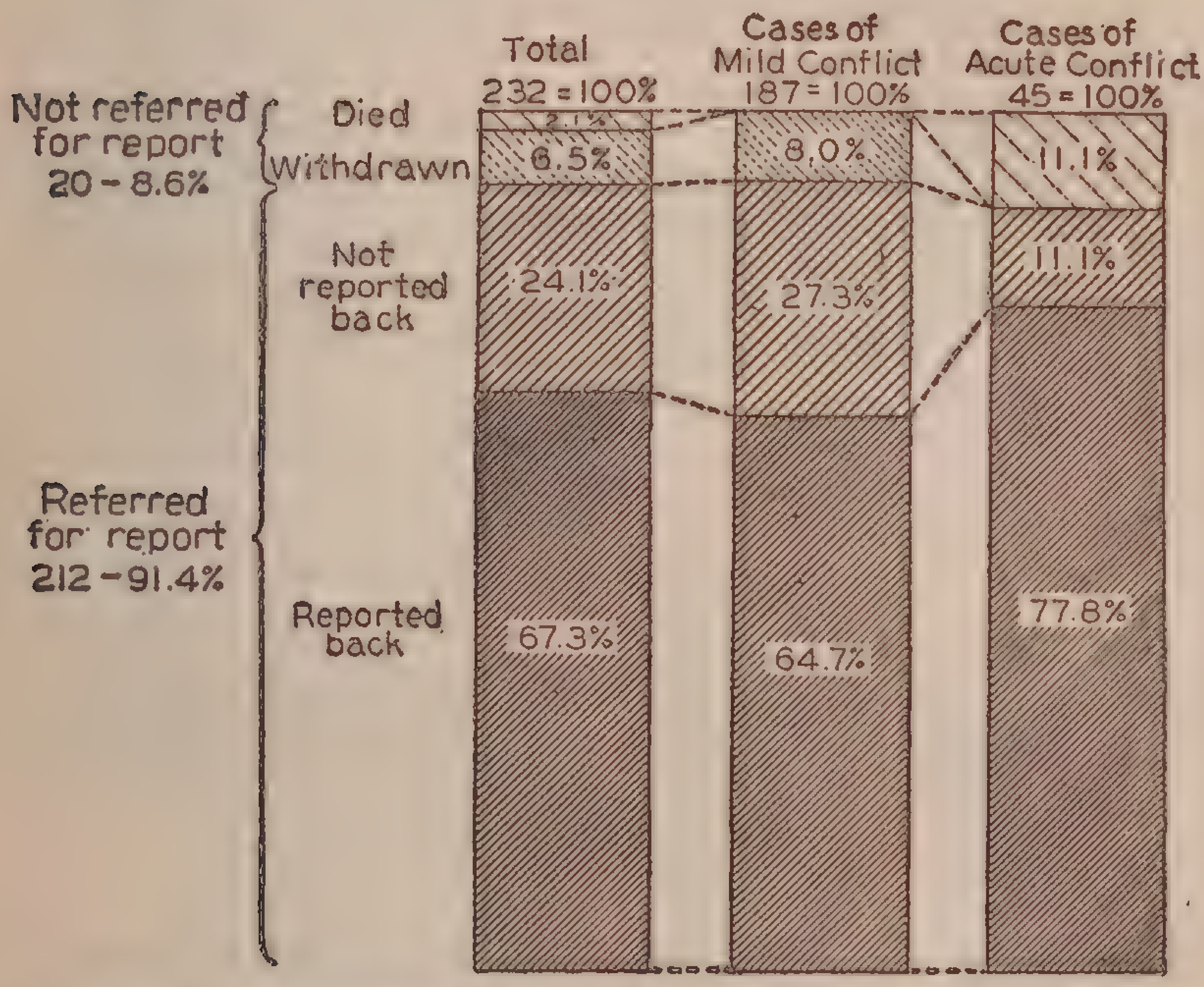


CHART VII—COURSES FOLLOWED IN COMITY CASES IN FINAL STAGES OF PROCEDURE ACCORDING TO THE ACUTENESS OF THE CASE.

on buying a bargain property remote from the district of Negro residence, in spite of the decision of the comity committee.

The fifth case, with three others, hinged upon incomplete discipline within denominations. Four congregations (two Baptist, one Disciples, and one Presbyterian) refused to accept decisions to which their denominational representatives on comity committees had been parties. This made the final issue that of the authority and prestige of the denomination.

In these cases, four single churches ran amuck and defied their authorized representatives as well as the entire co-operating group.

(One's verdict on these last cases will vary according to his interpretation of the obligation of the local congregation to follow decisions to which its denominational representatives have been parties. This obviously involves differences on ecclesiastical polity.)

Summarizing the entire twelve cases with respect to their procedure and outcome, one will not be greatly surprised, in view of their extremely difficult character, that comity scores so small a degree of success. In two cases the federation gave up the problem after discovering informally that the contestants were implacable. In ten cases the matter was referred for consideration and adjustment, and decisions were rendered. The four verdicts favorable to the proponent were all obviously forced by circumstances. The five that were against the proponent were all ignored by him, while compromise was accepted with only partial willingness. Comity thus succeeded incompletely in a single complicated case out of twelve and entirely failed in eleven.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN CASES

Returning now to review the entire number of comity cases studied, the following statistical summary gives the results in compressed form:

TABLE VII. FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN COMITY CASES IN CITIES, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO TREATMENT IN PRE-PROCEDURE PHASE

Cases introduced	417
Not formally considered	72
Withdrawn	8
Refused consideration or pending	64
Formally considered	345
Decided without reference	113
Carried over for formal procedure	282

TABLE VIII. TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO COMITY CASES IN CITIES, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO TREATMENT IN FORMAL PROCEDURE PHASE

Treatment	*Total*	DEGREE OF CONFLICT INVOLVED *Mild*	*Acute*
Cases carried over	232	187	45
Not referred for report	20	15	5
Withdrawn	*15*	*15*	*0*
Died without reference	*5*	*0*	*5*
Referred for report	212	172	40
Not reported	*56*	*51*	*5*
Reported	*156*	*121*	*35*
Proposal approved	119*	103	16
Disapproved	32	18	14
Compromised	5	0	5

*With condition or modification in sixteen cases.

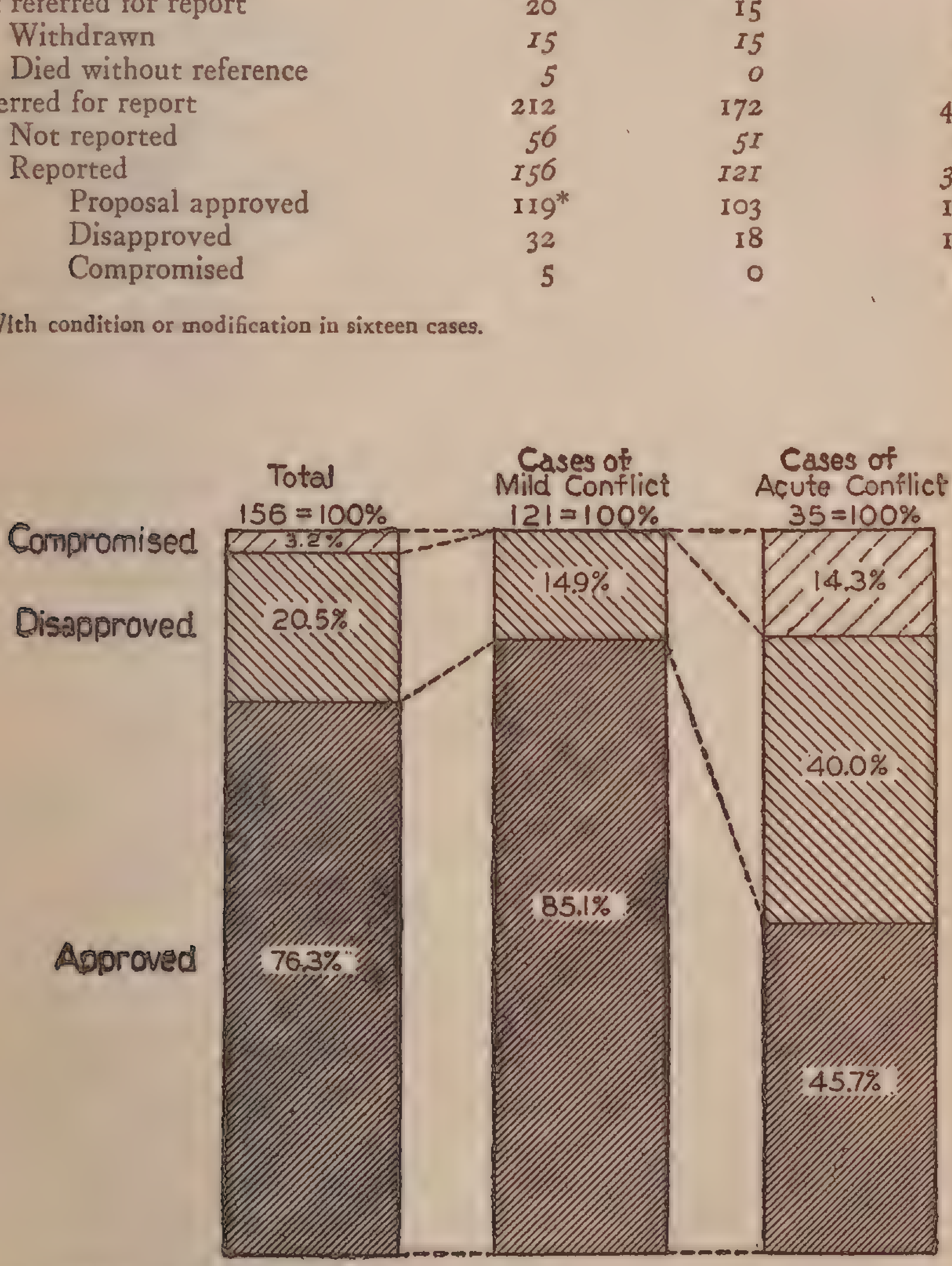


CHART VIII—FINAL DISPOSITION OF COMITY CASES ACCORDING TO THE ACUTENESS OF THE CASE.

The outstanding points of the above statistical summary are as follows: Eighty-three per cent. of the cases formally introduced got formal consideration, while 17 per cent. dropped out, were thrown out, or had not been advanced to the state of formal consideration at the time of the study.

Just one-third of the cases formally considered were decided without reference to further procedures, because it was judged unnecessary or useless to carry them further.

Of the two-thirds that were carried on into the procedure phase, 90 per cent. were referred to subcommittees or similar bodies for report and recommendation; but 26 per cent. of these never were reported back because for some reason the committee let go of the case in this phase. Such dropping of cases is appreciably more frequent when conflict is only mild than it is when conflict is so acute as to force the case to go through to the end.

Seventy-six per cent. of the cases reported back received favorable verdicts. But while the per cent. of favorable verdicts was 85 in cases of mild conflict, it slumped to only 46 per cent. in cases of acute conflict; and that too with the result that the parties decided against generally ignored the committee's decision.

FOLLOWING UP DECISIONS IN COMITY CASES

Entirely unsettled questions of procedure are represented by such questions as how decisions should be recorded and the degree of publicity they should receive. The following provision of the Ohio Council of Churches is unique: "Publicity should be given to the committee's decisions regularly in the newspapers so far as possible, through the pulpit and church bulletin, etc., thus aiding in developing comity sentiment." Numerous federations, in their published material, now and then refer to cases individually, and in one or two instances publicity has been resorted to in the effort to get public opinion back of a controverted decision of a comity committee.

Committees, of course, have no means of enforcing de-

cisions. They often attempt further persuasion. Hotly contested cases frequently drag on, as parties at issue are able to allege new light or bring pressure upon committees, or as committees find means of prolonging proceedings in the hope of ultimate harmony.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Behind the evidence of mingled successes and failures as drawn from the prolonged study of cases, one must look to the total practice of comity. From this viewpoint three considerations appear to modify the judgments which the cases suggest. (1) It may well be that the success of keeping cases out of court is even greater than that of settling them in court. (2) Instead of feeling that comity succeeded with easy cases and failed with hard ones, it should often be credited with such handling of the mild cases as prevents them from reaching the conflict state. (3) Finally, wholesale coöperative church planning in advance keeps many cases from becoming cases; that is to say, it puts the whole matter of church extension on the basis of comprehensive foresight, rather than that of piecemeal issues and decisions. No means exists for the exact measurement of successes of this sort; but it is obviously fair to recognize their possibilities before a final verdict upon comity is reached.

Still other considerations are pertinent at this point but fit better into other aspects of comity, and will have fuller treatment in other connections.

Thus, from the standpoint of practical planning, it will probably be agreed that comity should adopt no formality for formality's sake. The legitimate test of a procedure in every case would be: Does the process used secure the end that comity serves in dealing with the case? But formality should at least be carried far enough to make sure whether or not the end of comity has been accomplished. A case presented for formal consideration should be identified as such. It should be carried on to some definable stage where it may

reasonably be dismissed and then be closed up with some sort of a formal record.

Still more intimate problems of procedure are evidently bound up with the problem of the adequacy of committee machinery and techniques. If committees could be induced to attend meetings and give sufficient time to the consideration of problems, different procedures would be possible than are possible with the present low level of committee performance.

Finally, organizational success itself is not a final test of any set of procedures. A comity committee dominated by paid denominational executives may feel that it has dealt thoroughly with a situation when its members are able to reach a cordial agreement. It may have practical authority enough to put its decisions over. No effective objection is raised and all is serene. A certain number of people merely cease to believe in the church as an instrument of justice and kindness. Under a more democratic conception of representativeness a committee will not be satisfied until the judgment of the parties immediately concerned has been brought into the discussion and until these parties have been associated with the committee in reaching the decision. Thus conflicting ecclesiastical philosophies create sharp distinctions in federation practice, and ethical rather than merely organizational success has the final word to say upon any issue.

Large-Scale City Church Planning

The great bulk of comity practices as hitherto described, whether concerned with normal or with exceptional situations, represent coöperation undertaken in piecemeal fashion, case by case. A contrasting form of comity, which may be termed wholesale, concerns coöperative efforts to discover and work out a complete strategy of church extension for an urban area or an entire city.

For comity on so large a scale no set of general procedures

has been evolved. It involves a broadening of the scope of comity practice and the use of additional criteria. At the same time many of the rules and precedents developed by piecemeal use are manifestly inapplicable. On the other hand, wholesale comity tends to use a common method, namely, that of a somewhat comprehensive survey of the churching situation. It consequently remains to note sufficient examples of wholesale comity to complete the picture of current procedures.

Wholesale comity attempts to reach agreements in advance of the rise of specific cases or issues. It may stop at the end of a comprehensive investigation without attempting immediately to reach a common program on the basis of the facts, or it may go on to attempt the simultaneous allocation to the coöperating denominations of a large number of fields and locations in which future churches will be needed.

ADVICE ON COMPREHENSIVE CHURCH STRATEGY

Wherever comity is well established, it shows at least so much of the genius of coöperative city planning that the federation becomes an expert consultant and adviser upon problems of church strategy. Its wisdom is sought by churches and denominations before their plans are matured, and many conflicts are thereby avoided which might otherwise have arisen. Certain federations also, including those in Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia, have formed the habit of periodically requesting the representatives of all denominations to lay before the comity committee all possible or contemplated cases of church location or relocation, so that they may be discussed in common before any one of them is brought forward as a formal case.

DOWN-TOWN AND SUBURBAN SURVEYS

Many federations, too, have undertaken investigations of peculiar churching situations, especially in down-town areas

involving problems of foreign population and changed social conditions, in order to develop coöperative church strategy apart from the consideration of specific issues. Thus the Greater Boston Federation undertook a programizing study of the South End which resulted in considerable denominational realignments.

Other church-planning investigations have related particularly to suburban areas. Thus Philadelphia in 1927 apportioned twenty-six locations after what it termed "a casual study of new and prospective new communities," while Detroit allocated about fifty fields in 1928 for future occupancy and development by the coöperating denominations.

COMPREHENSIVE SURVEYS

The preparatory study made by the Detroit Council of Churches in this connection was fairly representative of current survey method. The city was divided into five sectors, each of which was referred to a subcommittee for investigation. The committee made some use of calculations of predicted populations as worked out by the local telephone company, but relied in the main for its conclusions upon the field investigations of denominational executives.

More intensive studies involving consideration of the social backgrounds of religious work have sometimes been attempted. They represent varying degrees of thoroughness and competency. The Pittsburgh Council of Churches, for example, and the Cleveland Federated Churches have made certain excellent social studies of limited communities, while the St. Louis Church Federation coöperated with the Institute of Social and Religious Research in an important city-wide survey.[2]

A few studies of particular populations have been competently made, including those of the foreign-speaking and Negro church situations by the survey secretary of the

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[2]Douglass, *The St. Louis Church Survey*, (New York, George H. Doran Company, 1924.)

Cleveland Federated churches, and the study of the Boston Chinese situation by the Federation Committee. Secretary George E. Haynes of the Federal Council of Churches has conducted a number of dependable inquiries with respect to the status of Negro populations in connection with the work of interracial committees; and these have had bearing upon comity matters.

The most conspicuous example of a competent agency for a scientific research upon comity problems is one that has only recently begun to function; namely, The Department of Research and Survey, conducted and operated by the Chicago Congregational Church Extension Society in behalf of the church federation. The preliminary survey of South Chicago by this agency was made the basis of important findings on the part of the comity commission.

A more comprehensive and adequate comity survey than any previously attempted has been carried out parallel with the present study by the Institute of Social and Religious Research in coöperation with the Minneapolis Church Federation. The investigation covers a sector of the city and suburbs including about half of the population, and attempts to work out a complete methodology for investigating comity problems in cities from the standpoint of scientific church planning.[3]

CONTINUOUS SURVEY

A final stage in the practice of positive comity is nowhere fully realized; namely, such a continuous study of the growth of the city and of the fluctuating fortunes of its several areas, of its demands for religious readjustment and for the establishment or relocation of churches, as would enable the coöperating denominations to settle any comity issue at any time on the basis of existing yet up-to-date information. With this idea in view, the St. Louis Church Federation has appointed district subcommittees within its

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[3]Hallenbeck, *Minneapolis Churches and Their Comity Problems*, (New York, Institute of Social Religious Research, 1929).

comity committee. These committees are supposed to maintain such continuous familiarity with their respective areas that religious needs can be forecast, and thinking and planning be kept ahead of any specific issues that may arise.

When comity is thus raised to the dignity of religious engineering on a large scale, it may be expected in some measure to foresee the future as well as to keep up with the present. In this confidence a number of federations have been encouraging denominations to acquire church sites in new suburbs at what appear to be prospectively strategic centers. In a number of cases the organization of holding companies for the interdenominational purchase of such church sites has been discussed, with the idea of turning over the properties to denominations in connection with future allocation of specific fields. But no such company has actually yet been formed.

Still other church-planning efforts have focused themselves upon common measures for holding the fort religiously at the centers of cities where most of the churches have disintegrated or removed. There are numerous evidences of a sense of responsibility for the residues of peoples left in these areas. But, in the large, comity has not registered any distinct successes in the coöperative attack upon the baffling problem of the down-town church.

Naturally comity cannot be expected to do what, so far, is beyond the power of any form of city planning. No important phase of the urban situation can be completely foreseen and controlled. No one yet knows how to make the city evolve smoothly, continuously, progressively, and always with a view to the welfare of man. But this at least is sure; cooperative church extension takes on new dignity in its large-scale version as it makes itself a form of city planning. For at this point it becomes allied with the most romantic of social adventures: an attempt to manage the city scientifically in behalf of human ideals.

Chapter VII

CRITERIA, RULES AND PRECEDENTS

The preceding review of the practice of comity has shown a recurrent appeal to standards of judgment, acknowledged or assumed. Thus the major premise of all comity is that the adequate churching of communities, rather than denominational advantage, is to govern church-extension decisions. This agreement brings in its wake a wide range of subordinate criteria. Some of them are formally recognized in comity declarations; others exist as recognized precedents or rulings. Still others are yet struggling for recognition or are pulled out of the common air of coöperative assent rather than consciously rationalized as bases of conduct.

The present chapter deals with such standards. It discusses the more important criteria, precedents, and rulings that comity practices actually employ in American cities.

Criteria

Upon what grounds, then, are comity cases settled?

The sources of information utilized in this inquiry include primarily enumerations of criteria in comity declarations and appeals to particular criteria as they appear in connection with cases; but grounds of action expressed informally in miscellaneous discussions and varying connections were also faithfully considered.

Attention has also been given to the particular angles from which the various criteria are brought to bear upon cases.

ENUMERATIONS OF CRITERIA

The typical comity declaration enumerates from four to six considerations that are to be regarded in the settlement of cases. The following is a typical example:

> "In determining the advisability of a new work in any locality the Comity Committee will take into consideration the following facts:
>
> "a. Work already being done in the locality.
>
> "b. The activities of the proposed plan and their adequacy to meet the needs of the community.
>
> "c. The fitness and ability of the organization to carry out the proposed activities.
>
> "d. The religious traditions and denominational preferences of the population concerned."

While most comity declarations note similar considerations as the grounds of comity decisions, no federation has ever attempted to make a really comprehensive list of the criteria it applies, or thinks it should apply, to church-extension issues. It has already been discovered that objectives are not always clearly defined and that procedures are not very faithfully carried out. Perhaps the same sense of weakness in practical authority that explains these lacks may also explain the hesitancy to formulate and acknowledge criteria.

Turning to the problem of classification, it is quite obvious that such criteria as are habitually recognized have two origins. On the one hand, they appear as passionate considerations alleged by parties to conflict. Criteria originating in this way are frequently mere weapons of anger or desperation. They include much fallacious argument, many inapplicable or ill-considered allegations of principle. But some of these improvised claims appeal to the common conscience as essentially just and consequently get standing in federation practice.

The more rational and respectable criteria are those developed by the thinking of comity committees in the attempt to

reach unbiased judgments. These are of two types: First, criteria reflecting the practical expediencies and moral equities which, it is felt, have to be met in arriving at decisions. Many of the issues involved here have already been recognized in the considerations of the sanctions and the relationships of comity.[1]

The more objective criteria are intended to define the conditions necessary for the adequate churching of cities. They represent efforts to determine when there are enough churches but not too many, and when these are conveniently located with respect to population; when churches are properly distributed in relation to other churches and to particular constituencies; and when they are well placed relative to the structure of the city and the habits of mobility of city people. Thus, federations try to find criteria for determining the degree of protection from the competitive invasion of its field which a church should receive to enable it to attain reasonable institutional strength and efficiency. Still others attempt to discover when there are enough kinds of churches to meet the needs of all essentially different kinds of people, and when the churches have sufficiently varied types of program to compass the interests of the several age-groups and sex-groups as well as to match all levels of intelligence and culture. Finally, criteria have evolved that determine the timeliness of change in the location of churches, and in the character of programs required to match the changes of the city, either by the removal of a church's location or the adaptation of its methods and emphasis.

It is not generally possible to find reliable evidence in the data, either as to the recognition or non-recognition of a given criterion in any federation, or as to the frequency with which any given criterion is actually used. Even the criteria that find most frequent mention in declarations do not appear in more than half of them. Of course, no federation would be likely to have discovered all the criteria that

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[1]Pp. 19f and 83.

have been called forth by the combined experience of the group.

When, for example, the Minneapolis Comity Survey gathered up and attempted to consider at one time all of the comity situations that anyone felt to exist in about half the area of that city, a good many criteria were promptly produced which the formal statement summarizing previous experience did not cover. Still other criteria emerged from the consideration of the facts. At the end, however, those making the survey felt that they discerned still other principles that were not seen by the federation group and were not accepted as valid criteria. This situation would probably be paralleled in the case of any federation making a similar experiment. The range of recognized criteria would be greatly extended by an objective consideration of a large number of comity cases at once, but there would still be a debatable field and disagreement as to what principles to adopt concerning them. In brief, the last word relative to criteria has by no means been said.

Those making this investigation were surprised to find that federations, starting with no precedents or fixed procedures, had apparently spent almost as much time upon the development of theory and the fabrication of technical tools for comity as they had upon the consideration of specific issues. But even so, comity in the main is in the rule-of-thumb stage, and proceeds on what are thought to be common-sense lines. Practicing churchmanship often means practical wisdom. It has a keen sense for the considerations that apply to cases, even though it has not actually defined them. Yet this scarcely seems a sufficiently scientific level of procedure, considering the momentousness of the interests involved. It is all the more important, then, to discover the trends of judgments and to consider whether comity is developing any adequate philosophy of conduct.

The problem of interpretation at this point is to draw up a classified account of what are actually appealed to as the bases of decisions in comity practice, and to give such a

rough indication of the frequency of each as is permitted by the highly incomplete records.

Analysis and Illustration of Criteria

basis of classification

The most outstanding distinction is that some criteria are assumed to refer back to antecedent principles, either practical or moral, while others rest upon ground of objective fact. The antecedent principles appealed to may be simply those recognized by common sense, or they may be various formulations of moral authority. The objective grounds, in turn, may be merely practical and related primarily to the particular case, or they may relate to some measurement of the adequate churching of a city and the relation of the particular case to such churching.

The major premise of the authority of comity; namely, that it attempts no coercion and merely rests upon the reasonableness of its decisions, together with the rather extensive use of surveys and city-planning methods in reaching decisions, requires that the most frequent appeal on the whole shall be to objective criteria.

The following paragraphs describe and illustrate the criteria actually encountered in the study of comity records.

common-sense considerations and moral principles

The criteria of the first group are such as would be bound to appear in any practical enterprise, such as ability, feasibility, availability, and timeliness. These appear quite frequent both in comity declarations and in argument concerning cases. For example, a church applying for approval of a location must show "that it can adequately support a work" at this point, and that the specific plan proposed is feasible. It may be permitted to take "the only lot available" even if the location is not fully satisfactory; or it may be

permitted to carry out a proposal if it will delay action to a favorable time.

PRIORITY

Besides such common-sense concessions to practical advantage or necessity, appeal is often made to principles that by reason of widespread acceptance as fair or right have acquired a working authority. One of these is that priority has claims that ought to be recognized. "All things being equal, preference shall be given to work already established." This consideration is much in evidence as related to relocation, as is seen in the following quotation: "Special consideration must sometimes be given to existing churches or organizations which, because of shifting population, find it necessary to relocate in order to serve their constituency." In the application of such a pronouncement, one discovers that what lies behind it is not a mere priority claim, but that the assumed moral principle is closely bound up with vested material interests and the intangible claims of historic prestige. Comity decisions frequently assert the obligation of "conserving church property" and churches frequently set up claims to preference based upon the purchase of property.[2] Moreover, it is occasionally said, and more frequently felt, that a church with a great past has special claims upon the present and the future. To consider such sentimental rights seems only "reasonable." They are, in short, backed by feelings that are taken for moral principles.

SELF-DETERMINATION

The most widely recognized of general moral principles, as related to comity, is probably that of self-determination. In its denominational aspect, this is expressed by the very frequent requirement that the desires and preferences of the people of a community with respect to their own churching are to weigh heavily in comity decisions. Thus Minneapolis

[2]Pp. 99 and 101.

directs that the comity committee shall "familiarize itself with the denominational tradition, as well as religious preferences of those living in the neighborhood concerned." In similar vein, the Youngstown comity statement reads: "The wishes and interests of the residents of a given district should have a large place in determining the type and character of the work undertaken among them." Probably much more would be made of this principle of self-determination were it not that city populations are ordinarily so mixed that no one denomination is likely to have a clear plurality of supporters in any given locality, and that the character of the population changes so rapidly. Much of the work of comity surveys nevertheless has to do with ascertaining the distribution of community preference as to churches.

OBJECTIVE CRITERIA RELATING TO THE ADEQUATE CHURCHING OF CITIES

By far the most significant judgments in the field of comity are those intended to apply conceptions of the proper distribution of churches in cities to particular cases, as relating both to the number of people and to the locations of the church plants, or those directed to making suitable adaptation of churches to urban conditions. Some of these adjustments have reference merely to quantitative considerations, but more to qualitative ones.

QUANTITATIVE CRITERIA

The two major slogans of comity are "no overlapping" and "no overlooking." The criteria implied in these slogans are primarily quantitative. They are based upon the assumptions that it is the right of all people to be furnished with available and convenient religious institutions; that it is the duty of the church collectively to see that they are so furnished; and especially that the demand for churches in the growing districts of cities must be supplied. "These people have no near-by church or Sunday school" accordingly

furnishes the most frequent minor premise to comity arguments. Of course there are plenty of remote churches. The implied argument is obviously that people should not be required to go to inconvenient and unusual distances to find a church of their own. Faced with this issue, the first impulse of comity is to ask: "Is the population sufficient to warrant an additional church?" If there are no complicating circumstances the case may be settled on this basis with reference to some practical decision or interpretation as to the minimum number of families necessary to justify the organization of such an institution. Many cases are actually decided on this basis all along the suburban fringes of cities. It is by the application of this principle that comity expects to get enough churches.

The principle of "no overlapping" requires that churches shall be properly distributed with respect to one another. More conflicts occur over this issue than over any other in the field of comity. No overlapping is generally understood to mean a condition in which each church should have enough following to give it a genuine reason for being, and in which it is so located as to serve this constituency without coming into mutual hurtful competition with other churches. It implies "a field sufficiently challenging to call forth every gift and energy of its members." Among the reasons for not approving competition is the fact that churches that are reduced to a mere institutional life-and-death struggle become burdens upon denominations and communities alike. Such churches have so small a margin of resources that they are unable to make suitable adjustments as changing conditions may require. Comity, accordingly, tries to see to it that, while there are enough churches, there are not too many all told or at any given place.

EXCLUSIVE PARISHES

When, therefore, the desirability of a church has once been demonstrated, its field is to be protected from invasion by

other denominations practicing comity. This protection of the existing church in its field may be regarded as the very heart of the matter. A concrete formula for the realization of this idea is that in newly settled territory churches shall have exclusive parishes, usually defined as one mile in diameter.

But evidently the desirability of such a situation, in any given area, varies according to the density of population. Accordingly, a few declarations state that comity decisions are to be based upon prospective, as well as upon present, population and that future increase is to be prophesied on the basis of past rates of growth. This criterion is actually used very often. Thus a new church is proposed. The first question is "how many people are there in the area?" the second, "how many will there be in 1935 or 1960?" The study of population trends by municipalities and by commercial enterprises as the basis of the layout of public utilities affords highly reliable calculations of future population in the several districts of a city.

No federation attempts literally to apply the formula "no overlapping" with respect to the churches of the older areas of the city. The impossibility of so doing is explained in the following quotation from the Indianapolis Church Federation.

"It is recognized that in [the case of] old established churches, parishes will overlap. It is now inevitable, also, that however carefully churches may be located so as not to jeopardize the success of any other, people may and will disregard territorial lines and attend the church of their choice. Nevertheless, in order to avoid as far as possible all conflict between the denominations, and to enable them to meet the common problem of providing church privileges for all the people in a rapidly growing city, the Comity Committee recommends that no new churches be established or old ones relocated without careful investigation of the particular field contemplated."

Such a formula recognizes the problem of churching down-town areas as highly peculiar. It is sometimes explicitly recognized that the center of the city affords a natural focus for the movements of population, and that it consequently is the right location for churches whose adherent populations are few and scattered. The church of such a constituency may well be *at* the center, but it will not be *of* it. It is thus not in a really competitive relation with the churches already there. In the main, however, comity criteria do not appear to have covered very adequately the complicated issues involved in the churching of down-town areas.

DISTRIBUTION OF ADHERENTS

The most constructive clue to the actual grounds of comity decisions appears to be this: Committees assume that a church has a right to a reasonable location relative to its own natural adherents. This is expressed in such judgments as "the proposed location is not satisfactory with reference to the distribution of the denominational constituency in the city." Thus also, in attempting an adjustment with a reluctant church, comity committees sometimes argue that what they recommend is a more advantageous site, even from the church's own standpoint, than the one the church proposes to use. But here again no federation has made any real formulation of objective criteria in determining the location of a church relative to the distribution of its adherents.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

Special problems having a quantitative aspect relate to denominations excluded from a federation's fellowship, or self-excluded from its comity practices. When it is sought to determine the proper number and distribution of churches that practice comity, shall the presence of churches of denominations not included be regarded? Obviously these, if they are of any size, constitute actual factors in the churching of the community. A few federations, for example, that of

Chicago, consequently say definitely that such churches should be regarded in comity decisions. Contrary decisions elsewhere have held that "eccentric groups" need not be regarded because they do not have constituencies that could be appealed to by the standard denominations in any case.

But merely quantitative criteria cannot determine whether, in any given case, a proposed church location or relocation does or does not in fact imply a proper distribution of churches relative to population and to other churches. Consequently a great range of qualitative criteria has been brought to bear upon comity matters.

QUALITATIVE CRITERIA

Since cities are made up of many kinds of people, qualitative criteria are more frequently mentioned in comity discussion than are mere quantitative ones. But there is apparently a correspondingly greater difficulty in reaching acceptable judgments.

Qualitative criteria fall into groups. They are either (1) derived from certain assumed standards of institutional excellence; or (2) they may have reference to the principle that the church should make specific adaptation to the needs of varying populations and communities; or (3) they may concern necessary adjustments of the church to urban structure and characteristics.

ADEQUACY OF CHURCHING

With respect to institutional excellence, the basic assumption is that churches should render ministries of acceptable type and standard. It is not sufficient that there be enough churches. Each church must be enough of a church to count for one. This feeling is illustrated by the Youngstown declaration:

> "No church or denomination shall be deemed to have exclusive rights in any locality unless in a reasonable

> measure it meets the religious needs of that community as a whole. The assuming of responsibility for a given neighborhood demands adequate effort and means to meet that responsibility."

Consequently numerous comity decisions are based upon ability of a proponent to furnish "an adequate ministry." Judgments sometimes find a standard in the neighborhood churches of the same denomination. Thus a typical decision reads: "This denomination should strengthen its two weak churches in the same part of the city before starting another one." Theoretical definitions of an adequate ministry are rarely attempted, but the discussion of cases shows that it involves such obvious matters as a suitable church building, a good minister, sufficient finances, and a varied program. In brief, the assumption pertains that religious people should be provided for "according to the style to which they are accustomed." When, therefore, considerable populations representing higher economic standards move into a neighborhood occupied, say, by middle-class people, it is felt to be a legitimate demand that the existing churches promptly rise to the newcomers' standards, or else that they yield a place to new churches that can do so. Real estate developers not infrequently put upon property restrictions requiring that church buildings shall be in keeping with the surrounding improvements.

Comity on the whole, however, has made rather gingerly use of the principle of superior and inferior institutional standards. It ordinarily tries to persuade itself that the churches of the coöperating denominations are equivalents, so that when one is present in a community that is only large enough to support one church, no other church may press in on the plea that it is better. Qualitative criteria nevertheless figure as threats held over the heads of churches, even though they are rarely immediate grounds of decisions. Thus the Chicago comity declaration says: "If at any time in the judgment of any member of the Commission the com-

munion to which a task has been assigned is not adequately meeting the need, the entire matter may be called up for review by the Commission."

CERTAIN COROLLARIES

As a corollary of the previously recognized rights of priority, the time-factor gets frequent recognition in this field. Thus churches whose standards are adjudged deficient are sometimes given reasonable time in which to make good before it is declared that they are not satisfactorily ministering to a field.[3]

Still another occasional qualitative requirement is a corollary to the principle of self-determination. It holds that the allotment of an exclusive field to a given church makes it obligatory upon that church to institute a system of affiliated membership so that a resident of the community may become connected with the local church as an institution without withdrawing from his previous denomination or abandoning its convictions and traditions.

CRITERIA OF SPECIFIC ADAPTATION

The demand for the adaptation of the church to the community is most frequently exhibited in the judgment that comity adjustments in any area should have regard to the composition of the population. Concern for the denominational composition of neighborhoods has already been illustrated. The more specific application of this demand concerns the racial and cultural elements of the community. Thus a typical declaration specifies that the duty of comity is to secure the effective churching of the city and its environs "with the many and widely varied people and conditions to be found therein." Numerous declarations include special sections showing the modified applicability of the ordinary

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[3]P. 99.

comity usages to foreign and Negro populations or to churches in down-town districts. In the attempt to apply such modifications, the problem of churches of racial or foreign antecedents that do not coöperate with the federation becomes acute.

TEMPERAMENTAL TYPES OF POPULATION

Very occasionally the question of what are presumably psychological or temperamental varieties of religious populations is raised, either directly or indirectly, in connection with variations in forms of worship. Thus one Baltimore case was decided on the ground that a non-liturgical church does not directly compete with a liturgical church in the same area, and this same argument is occasionally used informally in explaining why a church does not protest the coming of another into its field. Decision in another case held that two churches of the same general traditions and genius should not be allowed in the same neighborhood, implying that a second church of different tradition and genius might have been approved.

VARIED TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

Other phases of the qualitative problem of comity concern the necessity of providing for the exceptional range of urban religious situations through widely various forms of ecclesiastical effort; here a Sunday school, there a mission, somewhere else outdoor preaching, as contrasted with permanent churches. In brief, comity acts on the assumption that there must be enough kinds of churches to match all the kinds of people and all situations; and that this requires a certain proportion of agencies that are not churches at all in the traditional sense. Thus the Chicago declaration reads: "In communities where foreign-speaking peoples are found in large numbers or where economic and social conditions make it apparent that independent self-sustaining churches

are not possible, the number and character of churches *and similar institutions* shall be determined after careful survey and in the light of manifest needs."

QUALITATIVE CRITERIA AS AFFECTED BY THE REQUIREMENT OF SPECIFIC ADAPTATION

When it is determined how many churches are needed in order that there may be enough for each kind of population, the question then remains, what kind of service should each render? Comity has to consider this question under the general assumption that there should be reasonable adaptation of program to the characteristics of varied populations.

A corollary of the principle of the protection of a church from competition is the requirement that it shall not merely meet ordinary standards, but shall show actual ability and vision in varying and adapting its work to such social and economic conditions, as have been above indicated. Thus Minneapolis specifies that the comity committee "will be expected to ascertain the nature, number and quality of the forces within the community which make for uplift or pull down," and to base its decisions upon such factors.

Again where, by reason of radical social deterioration, community need has become extreme comity declarations sometimes specify that churches attempting adaptation shall be especially favored, as in the following citation: "Whenever a denomination undertakes to erect, equip and maintain an adequate institutional church to serve the people in one of the congested centers of population, it shall be given every encouragement." The same position finds expression in the Youngstown declaration as follows: "Churches or other organizations thus situated (in down-town districts) should be encouraged where practicable to fit their equipment and type of service to the changing conditions rather than abandoning the district to no adequate religious ministration."

CRITERIA BASED UPON THE STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CITIES

So far comity criteria have been concerned with the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the proper churching of cities. But either aspect is either directly affected or complicated by the structure and characteristics of cities. Criteria based on these factors are much less often expressed. Presumably it is taken for granted that comity decisions will consider—as they actually do—whether a church is well located with reference to major streets and transit lines, and whether its proposed parish will be reasonably free from physical barriers, natural or artificial (like rivers, railroad yards, or parks), that would prevent effective parish administration to the population. Considerable numbers of decisions were found to hinge on such points.

Other considerations of community structure are frequently involved in the establishment of suburban churches. Suburban expansion very largely takes the form of real estate developments or "additions." The relation of these additions to existing communities is not always clear. Are they or are they not essentially parts of older communities? The proposal to establish new churches in them raises this question. The answer is likely to hinge upon whether or not they continue to use the central facilities of the older communities, their trading centers, railroad station, high schools, etc. Here are questions of community structure that confront the practice of comity and have occasionally entered into its decisions.

THEORIES OF THE PLACING OF CHURCHES

In a very few cases a theory of the placing of churches based upon city structure has been evolved. Thus the Chicago comity declaration distinguishes between central and residential locations as follows:

> "Churches shall be located with reference to each other and their respective communities so as to afford

each one a reasonable parish opportunity and responsibility.

"In communities where there is a natural center to which lines of travel converge it is permissible to locate churches with reference to such centers, but they shall be so distributed as to prevent as far as possible overlapping in the discharge of immediate parish responsibilities and to avoid the impression that they are rival or competing institutions.

"In residential communities where converging lines are not so marked the number of churches shall be determined by the density of the population and their location in accordance with the principles set forth in the first paragraph."

The same qualification is more briefly expressed by the New York declaration:

"If natural lines of travel make it wise to approve the planting of two or more churches in close proximity to each other, there shall be an effort to assign definite church responsibilities, that the impression of rival and competing institutions may be avoided."

CENTRAL AND RESIDENTIAL CHURCHES

Criteria based upon the characteristics of city populations appear behind occasional declarations concerning the relations of central and residential churches. These are illustrated by the Cleveland principles as follows:

"That churches in the new residence communities of the city are advised to refrain from unduly influencing members of down-town churches to ask for letters of transfer; and that the down-town churches shall cooperate with the churches in the new residence communities in the matter of issuing letters of transfer when the best interests of their members are served in this way."

This position virtually recognizes that many city people may properly be related to religious institutions located at a great distance from their homes. That provision for such people would never be afforded by locating churches on the sole basis of community surveys is recognized in the following from the Youngstown comity statement:

> "Consideration must at times be given to the possibility of a successful work by a denomination that has a minor representation in a particular field but has a suitable nucleus for a church in the city as a whole."

Declarations already cited approve the efforts of downtown churches to maintain themselves on their old sites and to adapt their programs to changed conditions. They are matched by other declarations providing for religious care of abandoned fields when churches have moved.

The group of criteria just discussed is derived from the characteristic mobility both of city people and of city churches.

In an exceedingly small number of cases, the basis of favorable comity judgments is that a proposal represents a coöperative religious enterprise. The hesitancy with which such recognition is extended to interdenominational work has already been shown. But St. Louis, for example, provides for coöperative parishes to be "fixed in counsel with the other churches of the district, city or metropolitan areas." And a few comity cases have actually hinged upon the fitness of a denominational church to undertake a piece of interdenominational responsibility, especially in the more needy areas of cities.

Conclusions as to Criteria

That the working criteria of everyday churchmanship, applied in a common-sense way, may often reach wise conclusions in comity matters has already been acknowledged. The main impression of the evidence, however, is that of the

inadequacy of the criteria. Thus, no generally accepted formulas exist covering some of the most dynamic and debatable issues of church extension. For example, how the crowded areas of cities are to get proper churching; or whether and under what circumstances churches are to be clustered at natural centers rather than distributed in more or less exclusive parishes. The qualitative criteria which it is attempted to apply are almost never sufficiently clear. Thus almost everyone can conceive conditions under which there may be churches enough and to spare, yet when still another one may be needed because the existing churches are so bad. But almost no one can distinctly define the conditions under which this would be justified. Yet at least a full half of the real problems of comity concern, not overchurching or underchurching, but poor churching. Still again, while the need of adaptation is widely recognized, its concrete forms are most inadequately defined. When, for example, shall a churching situation be regarded as properly serving the peculiar needs of any of the more distinctive varieties of urban communities.

Thus comity, as at present practiced, faces the very urgent need of a more adequate scientific doctrine of the churching of cities, for which its present criteria are incomplete as well as being inexpertly used.[4]

Rules and Precedents

In connection with the practice of comity, certain issues not settled by reference to assumed principles have nevertheless appeared so often that they tend to be settled by usage, if not by formal decisions or rules. The scope of these rules and precedents may be summarized as follows: (1) Certain of them deal with matters habitually covered by the by-laws of organizations; (2) others deal with jurisdiction and the rights of participation, determining who may be a party to comity issues and who may represent the members in action

[4]For a more scientific discussion of these deficiencies see pp. 141 f.

before comity committees; (3) still other rules and precedents relate to time-conditions frequently attached to decisions, such as the length of the period within which an allocated field must be occupied in order to be held by a denomination. (4) A long set of rules or precedents relates to the proper churching of cities. It covers, for example, such matters as the minimum population which justifies the establishment of a new church; the proper distance between churches; the conditions under which a denomination shall be regarded as having occupied or abandoned a field, etc. (5) Still other rules and precedents consist of modification of standard procedures in their application to particular populations or conditions. Thus, comity for Negro churches is sometimes expressed in a different set of rules than those that govern comity among white churches; or special exceptions are made in the favor of foreign or down-town communities.

Illustrations of Rulings and Precedents

Issues habitually covered by the by-laws of federations include such matters as quorums. Unusual requirements as to them are sometimes made, in view of the denominational composition of comity committees. Thus for a legal meeting certain federations require the attendance of representatives of half the coöperating denominations.

Among rulings dealing with matters of jurisdiction and rights of participation in comity processes are those relating to the question of the geographical area of jurisdiction. The names of certain federations, of which the Greater Boston Federation of Churches and the St. Louis Metropolitan Federation are examples, indicate that they purport to cover their entire metropolitan areas. The constitutions of the Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, Rochester, and Youngstown federations state that the jurisdiction of these organizations covers the city and "vicinity" or "environs." But the exact suburban territory covered by the comity committee's jurisdiction is rarely defined; and has been a matter

of disagreement in a number of cases until precedents have settled it.

Rulings relating to participation have most frequently turned to the question of who may be recognized as authorized representatives of parties to comity. Since comity processes primarily involve organized denominations, it becomes a nice question to determine exactly who may act as their representatives. This issue was present in some form in one-third of the Philadelphia comity cases studied. It has to be decided whether a minister, unsupported by the formal action of his church, is competent to initiate a comity case. When information is sought, or hearings held, it is necessary to decide upon the competency of those who appear at the proceeding. When decisions are made, it is necessary to rule as to the competency of representatives of the denominations concerned to vote. Decisions on this point tend to vary with theories of comity. Where it is regarded as concerning conflicting interests, the parties at interest generally cannot vote. When it is regarded as concerning mutual planning, there is no reason for ruling any of them out. At present usage settles these matters with most federations and no single tendency is in evidence. A few federations, however, have covered these points by formal agreements.

Another group of rulings relates to stages of comity procedure. When delay is required between the introduction of a proposal and the committee's decision with respect to it, the usual time is one month, but in one case two months.

When procedures include the investigation of cases, a ruling sometimes determines who may act on investigating committees. Cleveland specifies, for example, that such committees shall be "composed of representatives of denominations other than the interested parties." Apparently the fear is that if they are interested they will not be fair. A contrary usage has set the precedent in Chicago. Here the federation generally refers surveys to proponents, presumably on the theory that the more interested a person the better he will get the facts. However, in all cases, where investigation is

left to the proponent, it is probably assumed that he will be checked up by the knowledge of denominational officials who are familiar with all parts of the city. When surveys are required it is almost invariably specified that the cost is to be assessed against the one or more denominations directly concerned.

A still longer series of rules and precedents deals with the time-factor as conditioning comity decisions:

The most systematic solution of these problems is illustrated by the Chicago rule that: "Approvals given under the principles and rules herein set forth shall be effective only until the annual review following the action of the Commission with reference to the same, when they are subject to review." The New York federation similarly specifies: "An assignment by this Committee of a special area to a church shall be taken advantage of within a year; otherwise it shall be reviewed." The Home Missions Council of Northern California goes so far as to say that all allocations of fields should be reviewed again after five years because changed conditions within that time are to be presumed.

A final group of rulings covers problems of the adequate churching of cities. The most frequent of them concern the ratio of churches to population and the distance of one church from another. Thus the Comity Statement adopted by the Governing Board of the Federated Churches of Youngstown, Ohio, specifies: "As a general rule one church should be sufficient to meet the needs of surrounding population of fifteen hundred. Under ordinary circumstances no new church, Sunday school or mission should be established within one-half mile of an existing church, Sunday school or mission."

The "Rules Governing Locations" of the Ohio Council of Churches says: "An area within walking distance (one-half or one-third mile) should be considered the immediate parish of the local church."

Rather infrequently rulings cover the question of what claims upon a field follow from the acquisition of property. Thus Youngstown rules:

"The mere owning of a lot in a given locality without the erection of a building and the carrying out of an active program will not be deemed as entitling any church or denomination to exclusive rights in that locality if some other church or denomination is prepared to proceed with such active program."

An issue met with in several cases of conflict is that of the right of a church to relocate in the general neighborhood of its previous site without asking approval. Most of the precedents are favorable to permitting this.

The question of when a church field is abandoned has occasionally been a subject of rulings. On this point Youngstown says: "Temporary suspension of work shall not be regarded as abandonment of a field unless it continues for a period of one year."

The likelihood that the problems above enumerated will arise in the course of practice would appear to be so great that committees should be prepared to meet them, either by rules or knowledge of precedents from experience elsewhere.

SPECIAL APPLICATIONS OF PRINCIPLES TO CASES OF EXCEPTIONAL POPULATIONS

It is commonly recognized that the principles and procedures applicable in what may be called normal cases have to be modified in dealing with churches of exceptional populations like foreign-speaking peoples and Negroes. Since, however, such cases are much less numerous there has been less tendency to the adoption of definite principles or procedures, and they have frequently been covered by more or less arbitrary rulings. Certain tendencies in the practice of comity in this field may nevertheless be pointed out.

Thus the Youngstown Federated Churches rule:

"No church or denomination ministering to a particular race or nationality shall be deemed to have exclusive rights in any neighborhood when in that

> neighborhood there are other national and racial groups of a considerable size. It is accepted as a general rule that hereafter a single denomination shall be approved to accept responsibility for work in each foreign-speaking colony."

This is an attempt to avoid denominational competition in dealing with people of non-Protestant antecedents.

The second type of rulings with respect to exceptional populations concerns the relations between the diverse types of institutions through which they are often served. For example, a settlement house with a broad social program is obviously very different from a bare preaching station. Several cases have held that two such diverse institutions are not to be regarded as in competition.

On the other hand, it has sometimes been decided that the change from foreign-language services to English on the part of a church of foreign antecedents is a matter for comity consideration because it brings an old church into new competition with other churches. In an Oakland case the Home Missions Council of Northern California has made a contrary ruling.

NEGRO CHURCHES

In most cities north of the Ohio River,the Negro churches are equally eligible to membership in church federations with other churches. In few cases, however, are they generally or effectively included. This means that the establishment and location of Negro churches has generally not proved amenable to comity usages. Negro denominations on the whole have not acquired the attitudes toward one another that give comity principles a self-evidencing authority, or that lead individual congregations to seek to apply such principles to their own problems. There is obviously no ecclesiastical means of compelling the Negro churches to come under arrangements that are significant only because they are voluntary. The circumstance, however, that a very large number of Negro churches seek the aid of white citizens in

financing their church enterprises has made it possible to enforce comity within limits in a good many cases. In most cities, Chambers of Commerce are looked to, to give endorsement to worthy enterprises soliciting financial aid. In a number of instances, this responsibility has been turned over to church federations with respect to Protestant religious enterprises. The Negro church, which would raise the funds, is therefore compelled to come to the federation for endorsement upon the subjection of the church to comity procedures. In view of this fact, Negro members have in a few cases been placed on comity committees. In other places where Negro ministerial associations or church federations exist, they function originally in the investigation of the proposed church and its plans and their relation to the interest of other churches. If their verdict is favorable, it is passed on to the general federation which then endorses the project for financial aid. In a very large number of cases, Negro churches have been dissuaded from unwise moves, or their plans have been modified for the better; but, in a still larger number, duplication and competition of the establishment of Negro churches continues.

DOWN-TOWN CHURCHES

Down-town churches and missions are also sometimes recognized as presenting exceptional problems of comity. A church in the thickly settled part of the city, which draws adherents from long distances, obviously cannot have its fortune settled with reference to any ratio between churches and the size of the immediate population. There has been little practical agreement as to the coöperative handling of abandoned down-town fields. In a few instances denominational responsibility for residual population has been determined by comity processes. Very rarely a church of another denomination, but one more congenial to the community in its changed conditions, has been substituted for the one abandoning a down-town field.

SUMMARY

It appears from the evidence that a good many federations are handicapped in the practice of comity because the precedents actually in use by them are not coherent and articulate. But the value of a codification of rules and precedents is not merely practical. It constitutes an important advance in the development of theory. The things that comity committees actually do need to be formulated in order to be discussed. One cannot effectively challenge a hazy idea; and the best way to modify an unsatisfactory precedent is to get it expressed so that its practical bearings can be appreciated.

The ultimate problem relative to rules and precedents would seem to be that of rendering unto rules the things that belong to rules, and unto freedom the things that belong to freedom. What the past has taught should not be so authoritative as to obscure vital issues in any immediate case. On the other hand, no organization should be so stupid as to have learned nothing from its previous experience. It appears on the whole that, with federations, the assembling and setting down of precedents has generally not yet gone far enough to enable them to work with average facility. They have made too little of suitable rules and precedents as helpful instruments of social action.

Chapter VIII

A THEORY OF URBAN CHURCHMANSHIP

The very considerable body of criteria and judgments which the best brains of American Protestantism have learned to apply to the problems of the church in cities ought to be adequate, one would think, for analysis and recombination into a comprehensive theory of urban churchmanship. Not that impressive theoretical formulations can properly be expected of the church federation movement. The genius of this movement is practical. Its expression will rarely be academic. All the more then is vital and adequate thinking to be looked for—such thinking as meets all types of actual recurrent situations with varied and effective solutions. And especially necessary is a working theory of comity commensurate with efforts of large-scale city church planning, such as are now occasionally ventured upon. A movement simply ought not to dare to set out to dominate the institutional future of hundreds of churches and to direct the spending of hundreds of millions of dollars without some implied standard, at least, of the adequate churching of cities.

Having considered and analyzed all criteria whose application to several hundreds of comity cases was recorded by some twenty federations, together with all evidences of theoretical positions contained in their formal declarations, the author feels compelled to conclude that numerous factors of great importance for comity have been omitted from the thinking of the federation movement as a whole. Consequently, the movement is doctrinally one-sided in its comity efforts. It is operating on the basis of an incomplete and insufficient theory and an inadequate understanding of the genius of

cities and the peculiar terms of human association under urban conditions. This defect underlies not a little of the failure of comity thus far. No adequate philosophy of urban churchmanship guides the efforts to deal with cases.

The situation simply reflects the stage of evolution at which thinking has arrived. Many extenuating circumstances can be formed. In the Minneapolis Comity Survey, for example, the following considerations came to light. This federation had had only a relatively brief experience (six years) in the practice of comity. During this time it had in the main dealt merely with cases brought to it. It had not gone out to discover and deal with all situations to which comity was applicable. Furthermore, it had not dared to tackle some of the cases of which it was aware, and it had not been aware of numerous other situations which the survey brought to light. A very large fraction of the Protestant churches were not fully coöperative in the matter of comity, thus further reducing the area in which experience was being developed. Something like the above description probably fits the majority of federations.

When all this is said, a doubt remains whether the federation movement has mastered the problems of urban churchmanship to an extent that justifies its claims for practical leadership.

It will be but natural if such a verdict draws forth the counter-challenge: Very well, give us some constructive criticism. Point the way to a more adequate theory if you can.

Any effort to meet this challenge at once compels the confession that it is difficult to find an acceptable and convincing theory of the modern city such as might form a basis for the treatment of its religious problems. Many of the most basic aspects of the city have only recently been scientifically explored, and thought about them is confused and shifting. Such valid clues as seem to have emerged are extraordinarily capable of being pushed to the point of ridiculous overstatement. In view, then, of the highly debatable character of the field in question, no one could wish to dogmatize.

The most that the present author urges is that the most representative features of current thought about cities shall have very adequate consideration and that older judgments concerning the city church shall be revised to the degree that the new light proves illuminating.

From this viewpoint, the following section is offered as a constructive criticism upon the present intellectual standards of the comity movement.

Omitted or Neglected Factors in the Comity Situation

The church federation movement as a whole has omitted or failed to give due weight to the following factors closely related to the practice of comity in cities: (1) The characteristic mobility of urban population as determining the normal place for its churching; (2) the determination of actually available population for the churches of any location; (3) the legitimacy and advantage of clustering churches in many if not most urban situations; (4) the importance of a complementary denominational distribution of churches; (5) the varied principles governing the churching of down-town areas; and (6) consideration of institutional adequacy as determining the number, as well as the program, of churches.

These six points will now receive successive discussion.

PERMANENT AND NORMAL CHARACTER OF NON-NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCHING

(1) The mobility of city populations, their tendency to find churches at a distance from their homes, is the dominant factor in the urban church situation, rather than the proximity of populations to neighborhood churches. Yet the placing of churches in relation to population has hitherto been chiefly based upon the principle of proximity.

Both in Springfield, Massachusetts, and in the "south sector" of Minneapolis—the two urban areas for which the churchgoing of the total Protestant population has actually

been traced—more than half of all the churched Protestants leave the neighborhoods in which their children go to elementary school, in which the wives trade at local groceries, and in which the men go to the polls to attend churches remote from their places of residence. In so doing they frequently pass by numerous churches of their own communions. In other words, the cause is apparently not mainly the lack of near-by churches of the denominations to which people owe allegiance. It is rather the choice of particular churches, remote ones more frequently than near-by ones. This condition applies to Protestants living in stabilized residential areas in which there are well-established churches as well as to those in new residential areas where the churches are feeble. Growing cities will always have a surburban fringe to which this situation will particularly apply; but, in the large, there is no reason to think of it as peculiar or as temporary. It is rather the city's way—which organized religion must come to recognize.

DETERMINATION OF AVAILABLE POPULATION

(2) The basic factor in comity decisions should accordingly be a scientific determination of the available population for any proposed church or group of churches. It is necessary to discover this before reaching conclusions as to the number of churches or as to their distribution. The people who now go away from the district of their residence for churching must be subtracted from the presumed church constituency in that locality; and those who come to the district must be added to its responsibility and made a part of the basis for its current churching programs. The prospects of the churches must be predicted on the basis of the number of constituents who will permanently go *from* and permanently come *to* any district.

Furthermore, the probable churching of the unchurched—if they are to be churched at all—must be interpreted in the light of the actual churching of the churched. The unchurched

are parts of the same society as the churched; they are played upon by the same forces and are likely to follow the same considerations when and if they ever enter into church relations. In brief, they will not all be churched in the district of residence, nor can they all be counted on as prospective supporters of local churches or as the warrant for the establishment of local churches. Only that proportion of population that is actually likely to be churched in a vicinity can be counted as available for cultivation by the churches of that vicinity.

CLUSTERING OF CHURCHES LEGITIMATE AND ADVANTAGEOUS

(3) In the older and more stabilized residential areas of cities under conditions of average density of population, and, of course, in down-town areas as well, the clustering of churches about urban centers is to be expected and desired. Where there are, say, twenty-five thousand to one hundred thousand people within a mile radius of any given point—even if only half of them are Protestants—there will be plenty of constituents for from three to twelve churches—none of whom will be at an impossible distance from such a center. Such centers naturally constitute strategic points of advantage for church location. Churches show a strong instinct for clustering about such centers. Exclusive geographical parishes are therefore not to be expected, and would not be advantageous. At least half of the churches of such areas should be grouped according to some rational principle. No competition is involved so long as there are plenty of people for all to cultivate. Comity should therefore concern itself primarily with grouping rather than with the exclusive attempt to spread the churches out as far as possible from one another.[1]

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[1]For a conception of city structure which justifies the above position, see Park, *The City*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1925). For an elaboration of the position, see the author's *The City's Church* (New York, Friendship Press, 1929, p. 213f, and 226f). As therein explained, clustering does not mean a grouping of competitive church structures. Groups of churches should erect common facilities for religious education and recreation, and should administer them coöperatively.

COMPLEMENTARY DISTRIBUTION OF DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES

(4) Clustered churches should present a complementary denominational distribution. Thus, for example, in a strongly American district capable of supporting five churches, the following distribution would be appropriate: (1) A non-liturgical and non-immersionist church; (2) an immersionist church; (3) a liturgical church; (4) a church, say, of Lutheran antecedents for the presumable German or Scandinavian minority; (5) possibly a fifth church of American antecedents, of the denomination that proves to have the next largest following in the district. Similarly, in a German or Scandinavian district, there should be churches of English-speaking antecedents proportionate to the size of the American minority.

Such a method of distributing churches would afford the largest variety within a given area, while their location at a focal point would permit convenient access by the largest number of people to the church of their own preference.

CHURCHING OF DOWN-TOWN AREAS

(5) Comity must achieve a more adequate grasp than it has shown of the nature of the down-town churching situation and its complex relationships with that of the entire city.

The distinctive mark of down-town populations is their differentiated character. These populations should be understood to include: (1) People who *live in* down-town and adjoining transitional areas; (2) people who habitually *come to* such areas as focal points of confluence in some daily or less regular movement of population. Down-town people are thus partly resident and partly commuting; but all down-town people tend to be differentiated into distinctive groups.

Population resident down town is likely to find its principle of distinctive grouping in peculiar racial or national origins. Groups thus originating are likely to maintain distinctive

language or cultural marks. They frequently live in separate areas, of which the Ghetto is the familiar type. Other differentiations are the result of social siftings, illustrated by such familiar down-town types as homeless men living in lodging-houses and constituting the casual labor group; unstable or broken families in rooming-houses; and economically submerged families in slums.

The confluent populations, though alike in down-town-mindedness, are differentiated into a variety of common-interest groups. In their economic activities they are sorted every day according to occupational classes and relationships. The morning and evening crowd is essentially a mass of people whose paths momentarily converge and cross as they find their way to the places of the special industrial or commercial activities which they represent. In their leisure-time activities the crowds consist of varied groups in the act of sorting themselves out according to the particular interest which they seek to satisfy. Common interests set up habitual movements of population and get partially institutionalized form in resorts, clubs, recreational places, and pursuits. They are fully institutionalized in the organized programs of the cultural, professional, or propagandist groups.

TYPES OF CENTRAL CHURCHES

A down-town church may be either the religious institution of a differentiated resident group, or the religious institution of a differentiated common-interest group, that finds a point of confluence in the down-town area. The common interests thus expressed are varied. As related to churches, the most frequent are: (1) Historical loyalty to an old institution; (2) theological peculiarities; (3) distinctive stress on civic or social progress; or (4) common economic status. Only the latter creates "class churches" in the popular sense.

Populations differentiated by language or race, but scattered over the city instead of colonized in down-town areas,

also figure as common-interest groups from the religious standpoint. The natural locations for churches of such minorities are down town, where they can most easily serve widely distributed constituencies. In the large, the down-town church which is not explained by one of the above differentiations will turn out to be merely a stranded church.

Differentiated churches are not strictly competitive within the area of their location, and comity should not so judge them. They do, nevertheless, present striking comity problems. In every city a certain limited group of down-town churches draws adherents from wide areas and has to be recognized as wielding city-wide influence.

In the first place, these churches are obviously related to adjacent populations and their churches. Occupying as they do the central area of the city as a common geographical parish (which they share with a great variety of small, localized churches), the great central churches must assume their position of local responsibility, particularly through the adaptation of their religious ministries to special types of down-town people who, notoriously, are largely unchurched or are poorly churched.

But such outstanding down-town churches must also take large share in evangelizing the unchurched who live in remote districts. The fact that they possess prestige and resources enabling them to draw *from* a distance so many adherents who are already won *to* the church, also places upon them the responsibility of drawing *from* a distance constituents still to be won from the ranks of the unchurched.

Comity must consider the relations of these doubly responsible churches; first, to the other churches of the down-town central areas, and, secondly, to the churches of the residential areas. In down-town districts comity must see to it that by the coöperative efforts of the great central churches and the little localized ones, all people resident down town are well churched. In the residential districts comity must

introduce principles of reciprocity between the local churches and the down-town churches that draw heavily upon the same areas, to be applied on the basis of facts as periodically as ascertained.

ADAPTATION BY DOWN-TOWN CHURCHES

The specific service of all types of down-town churches is one of adaptation. Adaptation is of two sorts. It may be (1) instinctive, determined by what the special types of people *want;* and realized when they have created their own churches in their own images. Or it may be (2) deliberate, determined by what special types of people *need;* and realized when churches possessing social and religious vision provide suitable facilities and programs for them.

The ability of many of the distinctive groups of down-town churches (representing special language, racial and cultural traditions) to provide churches of the sort that suits them adds much to the religious life of the city. But comity should not permit overchurching and competition of churches here any more than within any other distinctive group.

The majority of the great central churches themselves also plainly exhibit instinctive adaptation. They make selective appeals; one, for example, to fundamentalist constituents, another to people of advanced theological position. One stresses an educational ministry in the formal sense; another, a more broadly cultural ministry. A third is distinguished by its civic emphasis. As already indicated, these differentiations reveal the existence of common-interest groups needing down-town centers in order to focus the expression of their specific religious characteristics. Comity should sense these types of adaptation in the great central churches and seek to preserve them.

Deliberate adaptation, in turn, has alternative methods to consider. It will sometimes be realized through (1) special-

ized institutions, such as settlements and neighborhood houses maintained by, but not directly connected with, churches; (2) sometimes through departments functioning directly within the city-wide churches but served by specialized workers carrying out distinctive programs; or (3) in some measure, and perhaps increasingly, by the assimilation of distinctive populations into the institutional activities and relationships of these churches.

Comity should have its largest practical concern in down-town areas with the development of these forms of deliberate adaptation. It should maintain a council of down-town churches functioning as a subcommittee of the comity committee, which subcommittee should see that the needs of all distinctive populations are met by complementary rather than by rival programs of adaptation.

Comity will finally need to pay more attention to the removals of churches that find themselves neither able to prosper nor to adapt themselves. Mere removal is no remedy for such maladjustments when it takes churches into already overchurched territory. Consolidation with existing churches presents a special phase of comity problem and should be more frequently practiced in order that churches may not crowd into already occupied areas.

ADEQUACY OF CHURCHING

(6) Quantitative considerations relating to the practice of comity come to a final focus in criteria relating to adequacy of churching.

These considerations are indirectly recognized in most comity declarations and find limited statement in a few. Thus the Minneapolis declaration says: "Every field should be occupied by some church with physical equipment suitable and pastor and trained helpers adequate to meet the moral and spiritual needs of the community." But very little that possesses scientific validity has been done to apply these ideals to comity cases.

NORMS OF ADEQUACY

A practical plan of comity requires, then, that norms of adequacy be determined. What constitutes a proper church program and under what conditions is it to be judged as reasonably supported? What is suitable physical equipment and how much of a staff is necessary to meet the moral and spiritual needs of a given community?

Comparisons on the basis of the average performance of an actual group of churches may certainly be regarded as yielding tentative standards for individual institutions of that group. Thus in the Minneapolis survey provisional norms are arrived at by reference to the average performance of 124 churches of that city. No arbitrary and external standard was, or could be, applied.

The steps necessary to apply such norms of adequacy to actual comity situations are as follows:

First, the churches of the city must be graded with respect to institutional quality. In the Minneapolis case this was done on the combined weight of fourteen aspects of institutional excellence so chosen as to equalize, as far as possible, the advantages of the smaller churches as well as of the larger ones. By this means the 124 churches were grouped into four classes: the highest, above the average, below the average, and the lowest.

Second, the churches must be graded with respect to the average annual cost of maintaining each class. One-fourth of the Minneapolis churches studied were maintained at an annual cost of less than $3,200; one-fourth at from $3,200 to $6,300; one-fourth at from $6,300 to $12,500; and one-fourth at over $12,500 per church. Financially speaking, a $6,300 church was thus identified as the average church. If such an average is accepted as a provisional standard, the churches below this level are sub-standard, and the lowest fourth will have to be regarded as very much below standard.

Third, it is necessary to calculate the average cost per individual member of churches of each of these grades.

The kind of facts that could be discovered and turned into provisional norms for any city may be illustrated again from Minneapolis. Here the per capita cost for the four grades of churches was as follows:

Lowest quarter	Under $15. per member
Below average quarter	$15– $21. " "
Above average quarter	$21– $29 . " "
Highest quarter	$29. and over per member

The levels of supporting capacity should similarly be determined for the church of any city.

Finally, the economic levels of the several areas of the city must be discovered. This generally implies a survey such as commercial interests have already made in most cities. On some basis—usually that of average rents—the incomes of populations by areas must be derived and economic levels classified in some such intervals as the following:

Classes	*Annual Income Per Family*
Lowest	Under $1,500
Below average	$1,500– 2,500
Above average	$2,500– 4,000
Highest	$4,000 and above

A correlation of economic levels with per capita support of churches will undoubtedly prove that populations on the lower levels tend to contribute to church support at lower rates. Although many churches draw adherents from distant parts of the city, they do so in the main from fairly homogeneous areas; so that (except for the down-town areas) the average income of the population of the district in which a church is located is a fair index of its level of possible financial support.

There is no general exception to the principle that poorer areas yield poor support to their churches. People who have but little cannot really be driven either by loyalty or piety to a general level of church support disproportionate to their incomes.

It becomes, then, a mere matter of calculation to determine

how many people living at a given economic level and paying at the characteristic rate for people of that level, will be necessary to support a church of a given institutional grade.

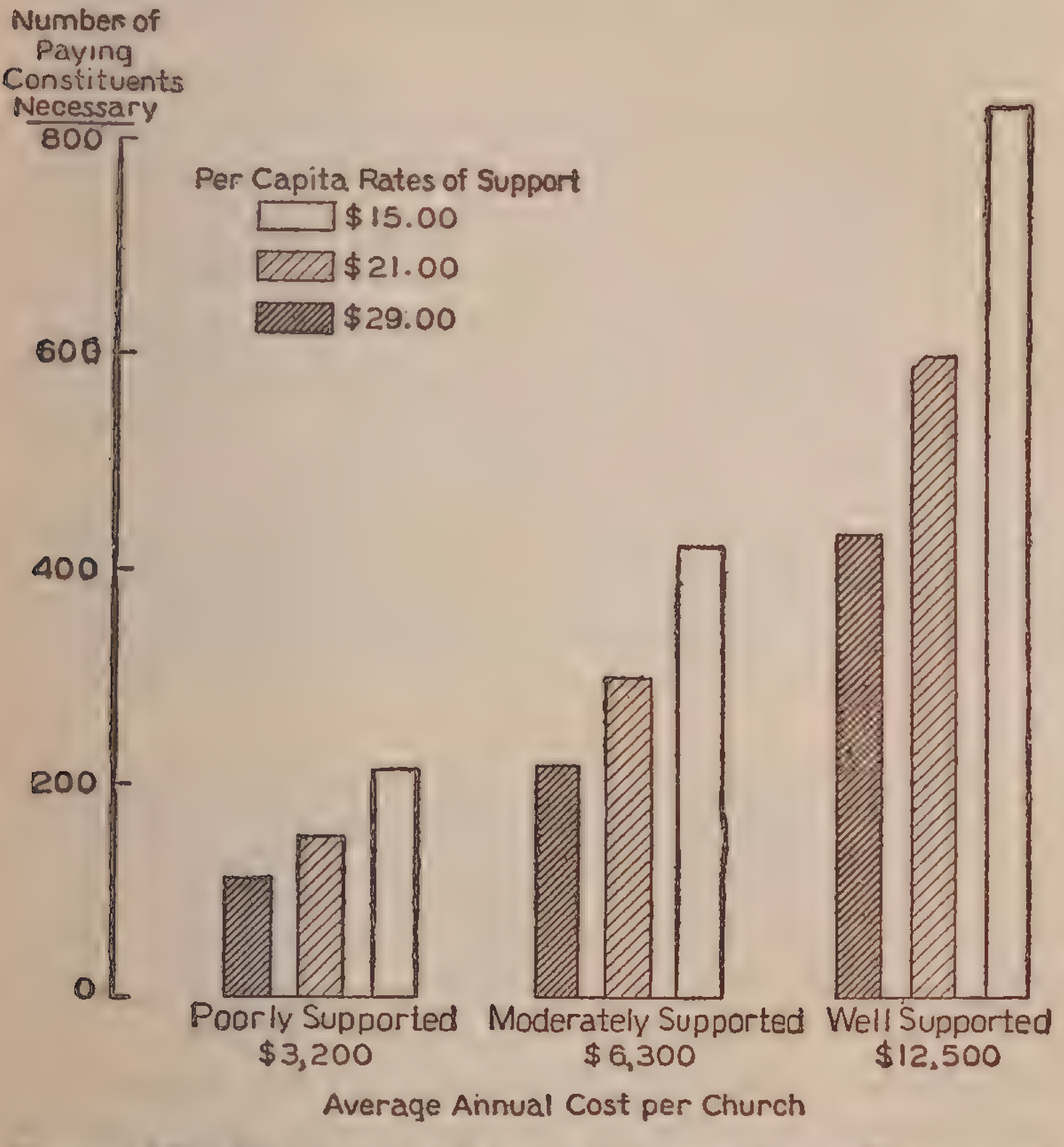


CHART IX—NUMBER OF PAYING CONSTITUENTS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT CHURCHES OF TYPICAL COST GROUPS AT PREVAILING PER CAPITA RATES OF CONTRIBUTION.

Further calculation will show how large a constituency will ordinarily be required to produce memberships of any given size.

Thus, in the Minneapolis case, it required 213 people paying at the rate of $15 per capita to support a church falling just between the C and B classes. Or, 153 paying constituents

at the rate of $21 per capita could support such a church. Over most of the Minneapolis area surveyed, it was impossible to expect the average supporter to do more than this. But the average church did not have 213, or even 153, paying supporters.

Considering the number of constituents usually represented by 153 or 213 paying constituents, it was found that only three districts in the area under consideration had on the average large enough constituencies to support the number of churches they had, even as D class institutions, assuming that they paid at the lowest per capita rate. And to support C class churches, even the rest of the districts would have had to pay a higher supporting rate than their population were ordinarily capable of.

More than half of the area of the district could not possibly support financially an average church at $6,300 per year per church. At least half of the population then *would have to have fewer churches* or else it would continue to have poor ones.

In such terms only can the verdicts of comity get convincing, concrete reality. Thus, when the Minneapolis Survey rendered the verdict "overchurched" against most of the area it had studied, this verdict could no longer be understood to refer to mere organizational infelicites, or to mean merely that the situation was a moral affront to the spirit of coöperation. It meant, in the most inevitable and objective sense, that the majority of people were getting a low quality of religious ministry, judged by what the economically more fortunate portion of the population was receiving.

This was a permanently inescapable situation until the number of churches could be reduced. Home mission aid could in a small number of cases bridge the gap between the low-supporting capacity of a population and the inexorable need of enough money to support an adequate type of church. Otherwise there was nothing to do but to get more people behind the average church.

When this is not done in any similar situation, a city can-

not be proud of its churches because they do not match characteristic urban standards in public institutions. The churches will stand in cruel contrast with the quality of the schools, the streets, the parks, the playhouses, to say nothing of the commercial and industrial enterprises of the urban community. Comity, then, must control the number of churches in the interest of adequate churching, and must so reduce the number that the majority of the people will have the better quality of institutional service that can be secured only when there are more people behind each church.

In this statement no attempt is made to appraise spiritual values. These may occur in abounding measure in the most inadequate and inefficient of churches, institutionally speaking—but they generally do not.

In no city in the United States did the investigation find comity effectively applying the criteria enumerated in the foregoing section—primarily because they are not generally accepted or understood.

Chapter IX

COMITY PLANS FOR CITY CHURCH FEDERATIONS

For obvious and compelling reasons it is inconceivable that comity should ever be practiced according to a single method equally applicable to all cities. Cities differ with respect to the general attitudes of their Protestant forces toward coöperation, and no one can equalize them in this respect. Their theories of comity vary, from the more negative to the more positive. The future evolution of comity practices is quite as likely to yield additional differences as it is to produce a common pattern.

To these inherent differences must be added certain accidental ones that look in the same direction. Thus, some cities are well along in their comity experience; others are just starting; some have but feeble resources and little equipment; others have much—they are able, for example, to make extensive surveys and employ expert secretaries.

Yet, despite these differences, it is not impossible to generalize the major tendencies, both of theory and of practice, and thus to derive a skeleton comity plan. The logical stages of such a plan are fairly self-evident. Its development raises a series of virtually inevitable questions. Different answers may indeed be given to some of them, but not an infinite number of different answers. After all, only a few typical options exist. Differences with respect to the scope of comity are to be expected, and comity practices are likely to find different stopping places; but the essentials of the plan are sure to be very much the same.

It is in this belief that an effort is made in the present section to tell how to prepare a general plan for the practice

of comity by a church federation in a city. Such a plan is conceived as being arrived at by thinking through a typical series of problems and reaching decisions relative to them point by point. Any city that will thus actually concentrate upon one after another of these logical stages of a comity plan (or their equivalents in whatever order considered) will have created a vital source from which to draw out its own particular scheme. By noting the available options at every point a city finds itself in a position to adopt those that fit its needs. It can then determine what rate of progress is possible for it and what its limitations are, and may also settle the order of importance of this or that aspect of the matter. Thus, finally, it will have turned the general plan into an individual pattern—its own working set of doctrines and procedures.

The stages in the development of such a comity plan as is here presented correspond roughly to the order of topics in the main body of the report. Their presentation, therefore, serves as a topical summary by means of which the course, and the major contents, of the study may be reviewed. Numerous cross-references intended to aid in this process have been introduced.

During the course of the field study, some expression of judgment as to the current practice of comity and advice as to improved practices was demanded of the investigators in virtually every city visited. Consequently, in response to what thus appeared to be a general expectation, the author has taken occasion, in connection with each topic, to express some of his conclusions at the end of the investigation and to offer certain practical counsels to those desiring to devise or revise their plan of comity. These should serve to provoke thought and instigate discussion. No pretense is made that the deductions drawn are the only legitimate ones, nor that the counsels offered are infallible. What are set forth are merely certain personal reactions, experienced in the light of a more extensive study than anyone has hitherto found it possible to make, and based on such understanding of the

facts and of the genius and exigencies of federation work as one mind has been able to gather.

Stages in the Development of Plans of Comity

(1) provision of comity machinery

The first step is to create or adapt adequate comity machinery. The problem is whether such machinery already exists for immediate adoption, whether it exists but needs adaptation, or whether it has still to be brought into being.

The obviously necessary minimum of machinery requires: (a) Some type of organization to be responsible for comity; (b) a constitution and (or) by-laws; (c) a special agency—a commission or committee—particularly charged with responsibility for operating the comity plans that may be adopted. To these factors must ordinarily be added: (d) a paid executive giving part or full time to comity matters.[1]

Some of the recurrent issues relating to the machinery of comity are:

(a) Shall the agency of comity in a city be the church federation? Historically it has not always been so.[2] Councils of denominational executives preceded federations as the comity agency in a number of cities. But federations have absorbed virtually all of these councils and the test of time seems to show that a church federation is the most dependable of comity agencies for a city.

(b) Shall the constitution of an organization fostering comity specify comity as a basic department of its work, or shall comity be instituted merely by the special action of the governing body which can, at any moment, be reversed by the authority that instituted it?[3] No real problem appears to have been raised under either alternative. Plenty of room at least should be left for comity, whatever be the constitutional basis, and suitable regulations should provide for its practice.

(c) What shall be the composition of the special comity

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[1]P. 18. [2]P. 6. [3]P. 17.

committee? This is probably the outstanding problem with regard to comity machinery.[4] Since comity involves authoritative adjustments between churches and denominations, with frequent large expenditures, the committee unquestionably should be formally representative. But since, on the other hand, it ought to be a working committee reaching vital decisions through intimate conference processes, it should not be too large for effective discussion. Neither should the insistence upon official representativeness on the part of its members be pressed to the point of interfering with actual attendance and participation.

(d) Finally, shall comity committees consist primarily of persons responsible for the making and executing of church-extension plans—the very persons whose acts have to be controlled and judged—or shall a comity committee be a body of impartial umpires whose competency for passing on comity matters depends upon their being personally remote from the issues that have to be decided?[5] It is obvious that comity as it actually exists is, by virtue of its history and its tradition, committed to the former alternative. In the composition of committees, ascendency is almost sure to be with the official ecclesiastical group concerned in church extension. However, accepting this as settled, a comity plan should seek to minimize obvious evils of preponderant officialism which will almost certainly attend such a situation.[6]

A contrary situation needs consideration; namely, one in which there are too few extension executives available to permit comity to work easily. Many denominations in the smaller cities are supervised by non-resident church-extension executives. In such cases resident deputies might well be appointed with authority to act for the executives in comity matters. This arrangement would ordinarily no more than regularize the present position of some person whose ability and influence make him a natural adviser of the executives,

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[4]Pp. 64f. [5]P. 66. [6]P. 70.

and who has to be relied upon anyhow. Something of this sort is necessary to give comity an equal chance for succeeding in the small city and in the large one. Otherwise it cannot fail to lag in the small city merely for the lack of someone on the job to attend to it.

Conclusions and Counsels

No one could make a comprehensive study of comity and not be freshly impressed with the highly commonplace conclusion that an organized interest is no stronger than the character and competency of the personnel to whose hands it is committed. The key of comity is the comity committee.

Like other voluntary organizations, federations find it necessary to attach to their committees a certain number of persons influential chiefly by reason of wealth or prestige. But the comity committee is no place for such. No one outside the circle of competent, intimate participation can lend it much of value. In the judgment of the author, two representatives from each larger denomination (one a clergyman, the other a layman) are sufficient to constitute a comity committee, together with one representative (either a clergyman or a layman) from each smaller denomination. Committee members should be formally nominated by their respective denominational authorities but officially appointed by the church federation. By-laws should provide that whenever a denomination maintains in a city a paid extension executive who gives half or more of his time to the area served by the federation, this executive should be one of the denominational committeemen. A by-law might well suggest also that the second representatives be drawn from among the lay members of city extension boards or committees. Such a plan would prevent the over-ascendency of the clerical elements in committees in contrast with lay elements, while it would, at the same time, assure the services of a maximum number of persons already actually charged with church-extension responsibility by their rep-

resentative denominations. From a committee so constituted better performance could be expected than the average large committee now yields.

(2) INSTITUTING AND PROMULGATING A PLAN OF COMITY

The machinery of comity having been provided, the next step is to get comity into actual practice. This means that a proper authority must take action to institute and promulgate a plan.

The problem takes concrete form in such questions as: By what particular authoritative act is the practice of comity to be set up? In what form and in what detail shall the plan be set forth?

(a) How shall comity be instituted? Surely it should be formally set up by the governing board of the federation and not merely by a comity committee acting on its own responsibility.[7] In certain other fields of federation activity it may be very well to provide for commissions consisting of persons whose views are more progressive than that of the great body of constituencies. Such scouting agencies, moving out in advance of the march of general sentiment, may well be encouraged to make their pronouncements and try out their coöperative experiments. Comity, however, is essentially a set of authoritative adjustments among denominations. It cannot, therefore, start out by attempting more than the general sentiment, as expressed in the governing board, can be brought to agree to.

(b) In what form should the comity plan be expressed? Constitutions and by-laws will naturally cover conventional items with respect to the comity committee, such as its composition and authority. But there may well be also a formal declaration covering the sanctions, the objectives, and the scope of comity, and an actual codification of its procedures, criteria, and rules. These would have the constitutional standing of a special set of federation by-laws.[8]

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[7] P. 22. [8] P. 19.

(c) How long should such a document be, and how much should it attempt to express, either first or last? Obviously, it is not possible or necessary to write down everything that is held in common with respect to comity, nor everything that will have to be considered in the course of its practice; but the declaration may well cover sanctions, objectives and scope summarily, without trying to cover all their aspects in detail.

It is the author's opinion that procedures, criteria, and rules should be stated with as much definiteness as experience warrants at any given time. Any federation practicing comity for a considerable period necessarily develops what is substantially a code and a body of precedents.[9] Such a code and precedents may well be anticipated at the outset. On the other hand, there should be no effort to make them complete at the beginning, especially by the adoption of the plans and rules of some other federation. Such ready-made clothing is sure not to fit. The only way to get a workable code is to develop it gradually on the basis of experience. Accordingly, the comity declaration should provide, say, for a biennial revision and expansion in order to keep it up to date and to include additional principles and settled presumptions that may have established themselves meanwhile.

(3) DEFINING SANCTIONS

Following out the series of logical steps, a comity plan has next to define its sanctions.[10] Either in starting from the beginning, or in reinstituting or modifying a plan of comity, it is natural to wish to discover and to state the sentiments and convictions that lie back of the agreement of the cooperating bodies upon a set of overt practices. The actual grounds of agreement always consist of certain common motives or forms of the will to agree. These are used to get a rationalized statement.

The effort to explore the bases of working agreements will

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[9] Pp. 115ff. [10] P. 19.

ordinarily involve discussion, comparison of the sanctions of comity that other federations allege, and a final formulation of such claims of authority as it seems wise to make in the particular case.

The evident issues to be decided are the following.

(a) How to conduct discussion so that it will permanently consolidate agreements rather than open or reopen differences. Discussion will almost certainly disclose a good many limitations to any authority which the coöperating constituencies are willing to admit in the field of comity. The investigation found evidence that certain federations had shrunk from thoroughgoing discussion of the rather shaky agreements they were able to secure, and had pushed ahead in the hope that the practice of comity would cement and strengthen the will to agree which, they feared, its attempted rationalization would only weaken.[11] And this may frequently be the case. On the other hand, unauthorized discussion is sure to crop out if formal discussion is squelched. The attempt to work a comity plan is certain to bring to light any decisive lack of the spirit of comity. This certainty should be faced by any who thinks to sidestep discussion of comity sanctions at the outset.

(b) It is also to be considered whether the attempt to draw upon the experience of other federations in setting forth the sanction of comity can be wisely made without radical discussion of the applicability to a given case. Certainly slavish adoption of another's decisions will have no practical authority.[12]

(c) When it finally comes to writing the section of the comity declaration that relates to sanctions, the natural question is: Can a federation wisely make claims beyond those that command general backing, trusting to the gradual growth of practical authority to strengthen the situation; or may it voice aspirations as well as realities?[13]

The author is of the opinion that a reasonable degree of

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[11] P. 21. [12] Pp. 34f. [13] P. 19.

prophecy may enter into a comity declaration, but that it is better not to attempt to get a formal agreement of denominations, binding them in advance to submit all comity cases to the committee, unless it is fairly certain that the proposal will be accepted by a powerful majority. Such an agreement can add little to the sanction of successful practice; but failure to get it when one has started to do so will imperil the very existence of comity.

Of course the statement of sanctions should be revised and enriched from time to time in the light of experience. Increasing success over a period of years in large measure constitutes its own sanction.[14]

(4) DETERMINING OBJECTIVES

A comity plan's objectives[15] should next be determined. What do the coöperating churches really expect to achieve through the practice of comity, and how far are they in a position to go as determined by the extent of their backing and the resources of time, money, and technical ability at their command? What more ultimate objectives are sensed than can be practically aimed at now?

Such questions will underlie the definition of objectives in a comity declaration. The decision may be that a federation can attempt only a minimum control of the more flagrantly competitive situations. On the contrary, it may venture far toward a comprehensive endeavor to secure the adequate churching of a city through coöperative plans and measures.

Many inescapable issues arise at this point. (a) How great are the federation's resources in time and money? The real mastery of the church-extension processes of a great city is a colossal task. How much can be done with real effectiveness?[16]

(b) In a given city, does the usual denominational machinery exist through which authoritative coöperative

[14] P. 20. [15] P. 37. [16] P. 41.

plans and agreements may be undertaken? If not, what substitute can be devised? Comity has gone slowly where official denominational representatives were not at hand for membership on committees.[17] Most of the larger cities are, however, the headquarters of groups of denominational extension executives. The effective practice of comity largely consists in getting these agents of the coöperating bodies to do much of their planning and deciding together. One of the most vital issues is that of working them into the comity scheme without letting them dominate it.

(c) Can a federation command sufficient money and technique to do expert church planning on a par with professional city planning in other realms?[18] This consideration may well be the final determinant of the objectives of comity in a given city. Only ability to make such studies and surveys as will furnish authoritative objective data as a basis of church-extension decisions can warrant such announcements and far-reaching objectives as are frequently made.

Conclusion and Counsel

This insistence upon limited objectives does not preclude the expression of aspiration for larger things. The statement of objectives may well suggest a future expansion of the comity idea as the habit of comity is established and its resources develop. But one must first decide upon feasible present objectives. The author is strongly of the opinion that it is better not to profess a goal toward which no appreciable progress can be made by means at present available.

If all that a federation can do just now is to undertake to umpire occasional controversies over church-extension matters, it is better not to say more than this in the formal document. Mere pious aspiration can be better expressed elsewhere.

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[17] P. 159. [18] P. 13.

(5) DETERMINING SCOPE

The next step is to determine what scope it is desired to give comity practices; that is to say, to fix concretely the list of matters or concerns with which they have to do, and the conditions under which they are to be resorted to in such matters.[19] As it presents itself for settlement, this problem asks first, what precise definitions to attach to such terms as establishing a church, re-locating, consolidating, or abandoning a church; and, second, what technical requirements to make as to the exact stages of any of these processes at which consideration by the comity committee is expected.

A secondary problem is, how to express what is intended as to scope. In view of the variety of church-extension problems as they actually enter into comity experience, is it well to try to have a declaration enumerate each and every problem that is to be recognized as falling within the scope of comity? Will it not probably be better to say that comity is to cover all phases of church-extension activity in which the plans of one denomination affect any other, or in which a joint approach to the problem is profitable?

Among the outstanding issues relative to scope, it will be necessary to decide the following:

(a) Whether problems of church extension are to be recognized as matters for comity decision when they are purely internal to a single denomination; for example, the creation of a second church by a split within a denominational church. If such an issue would *stay* within the single denomination, it would probably not become a matter for comity to deal with: but the moment the second church attempts to locate itself, it is almost sure to cross the orbits of churches of other denominations. It will, therefore, be well to say that comity is primarily among denominations, but that church-extension issues *however originating* will be recognized as comity issues when they affect churches of other

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[19] Pp. 44f.

denominations or the religious welfare of the Protestant community.

(b) Another important point to be settled is whether an individual church of a participating denomination may appeal directly to a comity committee in church-extension matters; or whether, since such a committee is a group of denominationally designated representatives, a church may come to it *only through the church's own denominational members*.[20] While, as just now indicated, comity may have to do with cases in which a church is at odds with its own denomination, a church in normal relations with its parent body can hardly be allowed to invoke the attention of the comity committee irrespective of its denominational machinery. Consequently it should probably be provided that a church may go to the comity committee over the head of the denomination only when it brings convincing evidence of the failure of proper efforts to be heard through the denomination, and that it is not now being adequately represented by its denominational membership on the committee.

Decision of the comity plan at this point may, however, properly vary according to the basic principle of federation determining the particular case. If the federation of the city in question is a group of voluntarily associated individual churches, then the individual church may perhaps claim primary right to initiate processes. If, on the contrary, it is an association of denominations, the denominational way may be made more straight and narrow. No adequate body of precedent covers this point; and if the problem proves a difficult one to get agreement upon it may be left in abeyance till it has to be settled in some particular case. Makers of comity plans should, however, give adequate thought to this pivotal issue. Certainly under no positive theory of comity should it be possible for something that actually affects the community of churches permanently to be smothered beneath a denominational blanket.[21]

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[20]Pp. 66 and 84. [21]P. 39.

(c) It should also be determined how a comity committee is to deal with a self-appointed leader of a church, even though he be a pastor or high official, when he fails to bring evidence of official action on the part of his group either for some proposal or in opposition to the proposal of someone else.[22] An individual may of course be heard as a witness, but his personal testimony obviously must not be confused with his function as a group representative.

The author's advice as to the scope of comity may be summed up as follows: Let it be clearly understood that comity covers a wide field under definable conditions; but do not define the conditions so narrowly that anything pertaining to that field can be shut out through the mere exercise of prerogative or upon a technicality.

(6) DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

A comity plan must next decide who are eligible to participate in comity processes. The problem here is to define explicitly whether and under what conditions others than members of federations are eligible to such participation and, if so, exactly who.[23]

The constitutions of church federations generally specify certain eligible denominations; thus implying that others are ineligible to membership. But this seemingly clear-cut contrast is confused by the appearance as participants in comity of a group of ineligible denominations; and, on the other hand, by the habitual merely halfway participation of certain theoretically eligible ones. Finally, too, the very concept of eligibility is found to apply only to the more formal aspects of comity. The benefits of pertinent facts, of wisdom in counsels, are available to all, including bodies not even Protestant.

The basic issue at this point appears to be how to include non-members of church federations in the practice of comity

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[22]Pp. 84 and 135. [23]Pp. 49ff.

and how to deal with the varying degrees of willingness of both members and non-members to participate.[24]

(a) Can the platform of comity be made broad enough to admit any denomination that will habitually coöperate in its processes, whether or not that denomination is acceptable for membership in the church federation as such? Each city will have to decide whether it is willing to include at this point bodies that are excluded at other points; for example, the non-evangelical denominations.

(b) A secondary problem to be decided is that of allowing and inviting partial participation by such denominations as shall remain excluded, or are self-excluded, from full participation in comity. Can it do any harm at least to provide that all religious bodies are welcome to come to comity committees for information and advice and to use the committees for what they are worth as Protestant boards of religious strategy?

(c) Again, will it not be reasonable to specify that a comity committee is willing to hear complaints from excluded churches whenever these feel that their rights are infringed by some church-extension activity of the included churches? This simply means that the insiders are willing to appear in their own courts at the instance of outsiders.

(d) Finally, under any positive interpretation of comity, will it not be essential to provide that outsiders should be included in all surveys and factual investigations, and that their institution should be given whatever weight their members and services warrant in the consideration of the churching of communities?

It is the author's conviction that a comity plan should provide a good many significant forms of participation that may include outsiders, apart from more formal comity procedures. Should such participation actually get established, the way would be open for a federation to offer many constructive suggestions that would not otherwise be appropriate in the case of excluded or self-excluded bodies.

[24]Pp. 53f.

On the other hand, no extreme coddling of self-excluded bodies is recommended. In spite of a few cases in which outsiders habitually sit by courtesy upon comity committees, it hardly seems appropriate that official confidences be shared and intimate knowledge of attitudes and positions be afforded to those who say in advance that they are not ordinarily in a position to submit their specific plans and issues to the common consideration. It does not appear to the writer that difficulties at this point become less grave for not being acknowledged, nor that progress toward fuller agreement is to be expected from people who are put in essentially false positions.[25]

In the matter of non-sectarian community churches, the writer is strongly of the opinion that such churches should be accorded exactly the same standing in comity procedures as denominational churches have in the matter of showing whether their existence is justified on objective grounds and whether they can presumably render local acceptable service.[26] If these questions are answered affirmatively, community churches should be granted the same sort of rights, exclusive or otherwise, in their fields as denominational churches are granted, subject of course to the same right of review of the situation from time to time on the part of the federation. Of course any federation that desires to do so at the time of allotting a field, may express the hope that the community church will later find a denominational connection; and it may properly reserve the right to approach the church later with such a suggestion. But the writer does not see how a church actually functioning in a community can be ignored in comity practice merely because it is not denominational.

A similar decision will have to be made with respect to non-ecclesiastical agencies. It is suggested that a comity declaration say that the federation will make it a policy to confer with representatives of city missions, Y. M. C. A.'s, etc., as to religious ministries that touch any sphere of

[25] P. 55. [26] Pp. 57f.

activity already occupied by the church, treating each case on its merits. The issue behind this decision is of course whether comity relates to religious organizations merely in their ecclesiastical form, or whether it concerns the extensions and allies of the churches as well.

All the more general aspects of comity have now been discussed from the standpoint of their place in a practical plan. This brings the matter to the point of planning for specific processes.

(7) RECOGNIZING INFORMAL STAGES OF PROCEDURE

The next step is therefore to decide what place and value to give to informal procedures.[27] Besides endeavoring, on common-sense grounds, to save the time of large numbers of men, the problem at this point is twofold; first, to create a favorable atmosphere for good will as the intangible something that underlies procedures; and, second, to allow the processes of coöperative thinking involved in making comity decisions to have a sort of prenatal period. An effective common attack upon specific problems is not something that can be forced prematurely. Obscure stages of psychical preparation have to go on and there must be due processes of gestation not harassed by formality and haste.

The practical counsel at this point would seem to be not to cut sociability too short nor to go too much by the clock. Let discussion range and opinion be tasted before it is brought to the show-down of formal procedures. Indeed, it would be good strategy sometimes to provide leisurely occasions upon which attitudes and theories as related to comity may be considered apart from specific cases.[28] This should be attempted only after very careful planning so that discussion will not be merely desultory. If members of a comity committee know and like one another, they will reach very vital results by informal methods and will work all the better if a place is made for these methods.

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[27] P. 78. [28] P. 118.

(8) DETERMINING STAGES AND METHODS OF FORMAL PROCEDURE

After sufficient place has been made for informal procedures, the comity plan must go on to define the stages of formal procedure that it will follow in the consideration of cases.[29] The problem here is to discover what matters can best be handled through formal routine, and then to see that formality governs and exact processes are followed so far as these are effective.

The specific items that must be determined are: (a) The definition and classification of comity "cases"; (b) the steps and procedures through which each type of case is required to go; (c) the limits and degree of jurisdiction to be assumed by the comity committee; (d) the committee's own process of investigation and of reaching decisions, including surveys; (e) ways of promulgating decisions and making them effective.

The typical points around which concrete issues of these sorts gather are: (a) Denominational prerogatives and equities; (b) the rights of the individual churches immediately concerned in a case; and (c) the reasonable pride, prestige, and effectiveness of comity committees as representing the respective federations.

Some of the more important considerations bearing upon these issues would seem to be the following:

(a) Churches generally are established, maintained, consolidated, and aided by the official acts of denominations. No federation will be allowed to forget this. Whatever traditional or constitutional process, and whatever administrative action, is involved in these acts on the part of any participating denomination must be allowed for in the comity plan, no matter how long-drawn-out the red tape is.

(b) The parties immediately concerned naturally are keenly aware of their respective rights. Here is a body in which they have only secondary stakes through representa-

[29] Pp. 79f.

tives. This body is passing judgment upon their material interests and their cherished plans. The parties to the case will want to make themselves understood in their own way—to have a hearing—and to confront their opponents. To devise a comity plan that will meet these legitimate demands, and at the same time not give them occasion beyond their merits, requires no small degree of tact.

(c) The comity committee may be composed of humble men, but collectively, in their capacity as a committee, they must find means to make their process respected for dignity and thoroughgoingness, and to give their decisions moral weight in spite of their slender authority. They are, after all, an actual official agency of the coöperating churches; and, to the extent of their formal or practical recognition, are entitled to all the recognition accorded to any ecclesiastical agency.

(d) In issues between these parties to comity procedures something may be said for a "decent respect for the opinions of mankind."[30] Mankind, after all, does not like bluff or sham or cowardice or shoddy workmanship. High sincerity should go into a comity plan, and every proposed step should be one that it is really intended to follow under definable, recurrent circumstances.

Conclusion and Counsel

The writer advises (a) that comity declarations shall require exact formality in the introduction of cases upon which action is desired. Each case should be given a serial number and a permanent designation. This last specification is important because experience shows that the same case sometimes appears under a number of different names, with the result that a committee does not always know what it is talking about.

(b) A second requirement should be that of an exact statement of what is proposed. While exactness is essential,

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[30]Pp. 91f.

there should be no effort to make the proposal more positive than is intended. One should be permitted to initiate a case merely to the extent of asking for information and advice. If, however, some specific proposal is actually in mind the proponent should be required to state just what is wanted.

(c) It will be well to require equal formality in withdrawing a case as in introducing it.

(d) There should also be provision for a periodic clearing of the docket by the committee, to take care of cases that have neither been pressed within a reasonable time nor formally withdrawn. A record of the cases stricken out should be carefully kept.[31]

(e) The reference of all cases either for review by a competent authority (a paid secretary or subcommittee) on the basis of data supplied by the proponent, or for securing additional data, should be invariably required. The author is strongly opposed to providing any means of reaching comity decisions upon cases formally presented to committees without such reference.[32] In his view, no cases exist that can properly be settled merely on the representation of the proponent, or allowed to pass simply in default of opposition. Real emergencies may always be met by parliamentary suspension of the rules; otherwise, a case once formally initiated should invariably receive formal consideration and action.

(f) The necessity of a survey in any given case depends upon how much actual and up-to-date objective information about its city and churches is in the continuous possession of the federation. The author recommends that a survey *or its full equivalent* shall be required in all cases accepted by the comity committee for consideration. Forms and schedules for making surveys when required should be provided, so that the results will be dependable and comparable.[33]

(g) The wickedest, stupidest, and least excusable failure of comity processes is the failure to keep accurate and adequate records of the course taken by cases, of the data

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[31]In connection with the four preceding paragraphs see pp. 79-94

[32]P. 84. [33]P. 90.

presented, and of the decisions reached. That federations are financially poor and the workers overburdened is no excuse in so important a matter, especially when the record may be appealed to at any time as a basis for the interpretation of, or as a ground for the reconsideration of, action. By its very nature, a significant comity case is likely to pass through several stages. If it is to be regarded as a vital link in the adequate churching of a city, its story at each stage must be set down systematically, fully, and authoritatively.

(9) DECIDING UPON CRITERIA

No other single step toward a practical plan of comity is so important as the formulation of the viewpoints, attitudes, and judgments by means of which the comity committee deals with, and reaches decisions in, specific cases.[34] The processes involved in this step are essentially three: (a) The identification of the criteria actually used in deciding comity cases; (b) criticism of them in order to determine which are of permanent worth and how they are to be stated; and, finally, (c) their organization into a set of working principles covering the recurrent problems of comity.

The concrete aspects in which the problem of criteria recurrently appears include all the fundamental church-extension phenomena, such as the location, re-location, abandonment, and consolidation, as well as the adaptation of churches. Grounds for rational decisions, telling when and under what circumstances any one of these processes should be applied to actual situations, have to be discovered and formulated. The outstanding result of the study of comity in this aspect is that the problems, in the main, vary with the different structural divisions of cities, and that the criteria applied grow out of an understanding of, or judgment concerning, some aspect or characteristic of cities as it affects organized religion.

The structural divisions of cities whose characteristics de-

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[34] P. 119.

termine problems and criteria are: (a) The suburban fringe and newer residential areas where the problem is chiefly that of organizing new churches in such a way that they shall serve the population and not compete with one another; (b) the stabilized residential areas where the problem is primarily that of the distribution, and frequently of the re-location, of churches; (c) the down-town section and the transitional zone adjoining it, where the alternative problems are largely those of the removal of churches or the adaptation of their ministries to the needs of the distinctive types of people that populate such areas.

In the preceding discussion of comity criteria the facts were so arranged as to throw into relief the major issues involved. They were primarily issues (a) of practicability (ordinarily as related to the capacity and competency of those making a comity proposal to carry it out); (b) of moral rights (as conceived to be implied, for example, in the priority or prestige of some church involved in a comity case or of self-determination on the part of a population as to the type of church it wants); (c) of the adequate churching of cities both in its quantitative and its qualitative aspect.

Reflection upon the issues involved in the use of comity criteria brings to the front certain considerations of a general character that anyone attempting to make a practical plan for comity will wish to review. Thus, for example, while enough weight should be given to considerations of practicability to encourage denominations and church-extension agencies to undertake the necessary churching of the cities, these considerations should not be overweighted, as they frequently are. A long-time view of the case will frequently compel a different perspective to be adopted. Again, the alleged moral rights of the parties to comity have to be applied in specific cases with regard to the peculiar facts of each. Principles defining such rights should, therefore, not be so broadly stated as to compromise actual freedom of decision. Still further, urban life has its own logic and sets the law for urban institutions. The adequate churching of cities

involves different policies from those that succeed with other units of civilization.

Finally, the objective conditions that determine the success or failure of church-extension plans are especially powerful, sudden, and relentless in cities. No other sphere in which decisions in regard to churching have to be made requires so complete a respect for objective conditions in contrast with mere sentiments and ambitions.

Unsettled Problems

A comity plan will have to face without criteria numerous unsettled problems of urban churchmanship, because the grounds on which decisions might rest are not clear. The underlying feeling of coöperation has not developed to the point of covering all issues. There are many issues the answers to which no one knows; hence acceptable rationalizations concerning them are not possible.

It is the author's personal judgment, for example, that (a) missions and Sunday schools preceding the establishment of churches should ordinarily be projected and fostered interdenominationally;[35] (b) that churches in new areas should frequently be community churches organized under federation auspices and temporarily without denominational affiliation, rather than inevitably denominational from the start;[36] and (c) that clustered churches should organize and maintain common institutions of religious education, recreation, and community service on the secondary-school level.[37] That is to say, instead of each church of the neighborhood attempting to erect a plant with a complete modern equipment for religious education, a gymnasium, and elaborate service facilities, each should have a suitable house of worship and place for the training of young children. But the group as such should build a joint plant for use as a religious education high school, should equip it with facilities, and carry on in it a collective program to meet the requirements

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[35] Pp. 59f. [36] P. 57. [37] P. 145.

of older youth. Instead of adding specialist upon specialist to their staffs competitively, the grouped churches should employ specialists in common in connection with their institution. The type of institution suggested would be like a branch Y. M. C. A., only it would serve both men and women and be directly supported and controlled by the coöperating churches rather than by an independent and self-perpetuating group. (Both in operation and support the new type of organization might well reach working agreements with the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A.)

In view of such unsettled problems, which nevertheless cast their shadows upon all present planning, a comity plan should be like a building with one wall left out in the direction of the future. Construction should be continuous and the final plan should be as large as the growth of the cooperative imagination and ideal may require.

(10) OMITTING RULINGS

A plan of comity must start with tentative definitions covering the main aspects of the field it attempts to cover, and with an outline of procedures. But it should not attempt a set of rulings in advance of the actual handling of cases.

The rulings should follow the logic of the larger decisions; such as those relating to the scope of comity, to the degree of thoroughgoingness of its procedures, to whether the interpretation of comity tends to be negative or positive, and to what criteria are included or neglected. In any case they should originate in connection with real issues. The author consequently has no set of counsels to offer with respect to rulings.

It nevertheless seems important to show how more general positions will affect rulings. Thus, in the author's view, the genius of comity is distinctly not legalistic but fraternal. The occasional rulings that do not permit the representative of a denomination on a comity committee to vote upon a case that concerns his denomination, or that

bars a denomination proposing the organization of a church from conducting the investigation of objective facts bearing upon such a proposal, smack of court procedure rather than of mutual confidence in the pursuit of common ends.[38] They invoke the psychology of opposition needlessly. The comity committee is a body of conferees in matters of common concern. One particular denomination or church now, and another at some other time, stands nearer to the center of a given problem than the rest. But the problem is a common one all of the time.

In the development of a plan of comity the first attempt to apply the general positions taken to actual cases will call for rulings. It will then be pertinent to make them. Until that time comes it is impertinent.

(II) WEIGHING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONFERENCE PROCESSES

Entering as a determinant into almost every step of the development of a plan of comity is one or another theory of what makes organizational machinery effective. When anything is undertaken through representatives (in the fashion of which the committee system is a type) precisely what is it that secures satisfactory and workable results? By what means are the feelings that accompany the processes of the machinery kept agreeable to the objects for which the machinery is operated?

The concrete phenomena through which these problems express themselves are those attached to committee discussion and decision.[39] First of all there are parliamentary processes to be considered; occasions and methods of conducting meetings; the techniques of presenting and considering business; and the varied procedures of comity committees as they have been described. All these are parts of the attempt to induce the meeting of minds and to secure their vital assent to common decisions.

The major issues are, briefly, those of keeping interest

[38]Pp. 77 and 135. [39]Pp. 71f.

alive, of satisfying theories of representativeness, and of substituting genuinely coöperative thinking for the mere watch-dog psychology of the partisan or the trading adjustments that cover up real lack of agreement. In short, the issues are the substitution of rational and moral alternatives for mechanical or essentially immoral methods now too much in vogue.

Major considerations bearing upon these issues include the composition of comity committees, especially the combination in the persons of their members of representative capacity and real personal ability to deal with the problems involved. Much depends upon the atunement of mind to mind as fellow committeemen become accustomed to working together. This involves continuity of interest and attendance. The consistency of the course of the committee, the continuous feeding-in of materials by means of which it may reach its decisions, the control of action, and the relating of this to the total action of the federation form the function of the executive. Peace at any price has no place in a scheme of comity; but agreement by means of a right approach, proper procedures, and genuinely coöperative thinking is a valid and compelling ideal.

Finally to be considered is the ideal of creative thinking in connection with group discussion. The proponents of this ideal may not be altogether wrong in surrounding the process with a sort of mystical halo. Assuming the Christian conception that the divine will sometimes takes possession of the human will, no circumstances could be more favorable for the realization of this high transaction than that a competent representative body, using the best practical techniques, shall have possessed itself as completely as possible of the fraternal spirit in the effort to reach wise and right decisions concerning the church.

And by just so much as the conference process is idealized, its records deserve to be worthily kept and faithfully recorded.

It is the judgment of the author that comity committees

vary quite as distinctly in moral achievement as they do either in technical equipment or in formal processes; that the real religious possibilities of committee work are by no means adequately explored and have every right to demand profound consideration.

THE END



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